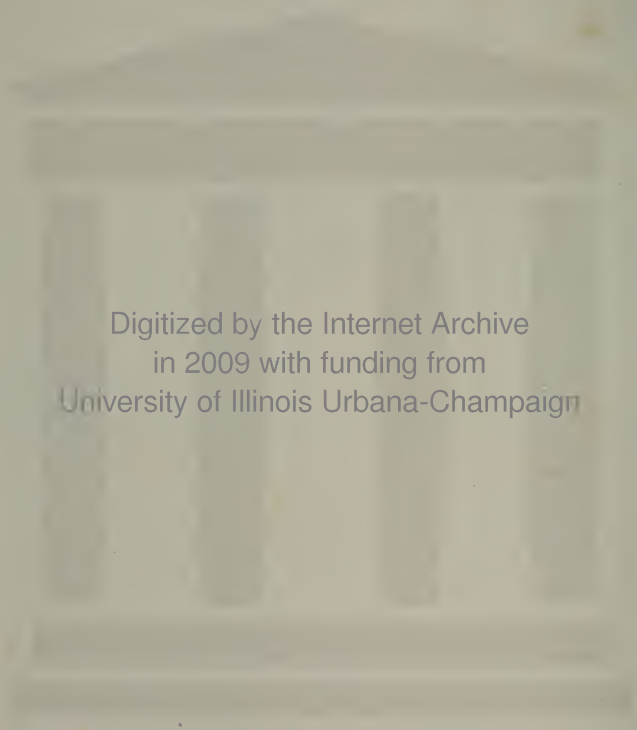




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THE LADY RESIDENT.



THE LADY RESIDENT.

A Novel.

BY
HAMILTON PAGE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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THE LADY RESIDENT.

CHAPTER XVII.

MISTAKEN VIEWS.

MISS CRAYSTON sat in the office at St. Mary's College looking ill and pre-occupied. Bertie stood at a window, watching the clouds.

Professors and college students, one after the other, entered, and greeted the Lady Resident, who replied in an absent manner, and turned hastily to the door at the sound of every fresh footstep.

When the bustle of arrival was over, and the classes had begun work, Mrs. Armstrong and Miss le Mesurier appeared, followed by Miss Flint. Bertie saw them coming. She left the window and marched up to the table. The three elder ladies looked uncomfortable.

After a moment of silence Mrs. Armstrong said :

“ From what Mrs. Brownlow says, I am afraid you did not receive a note from me yesterday, Miss Crayston ? ”

“ I did not. Pray by whom was it sent ? ”

“ Well, I am afraid that in the midst of so many arrangements it may have been overlooked. ”

“ I regret it deeply : ” said Miss Crayston, “ I should have begged you to postpone the evening party. ”

“ We telegraphed to Miss Kimberley Finch, ” interposed Miss le Mesurier, harshly, “ and she strongly urged us not to postpone it. It would have been a great blow to the interest of the college, for several county people were expected. ”

“ Besides, ” added Mrs. Armstrong, “ the dear girls in the house are confided to our care. We must not cast over them the gloom and sorrow that death brings to the young and thoughtless. There was something very noble in Miss Kimberley Finch’s words. ‘ Remember others, ’ she telegraphed, ‘ act for others ; let grief for the dead follow duty to the living, not supersede it. ’ If you will receive that as a key - note you will understand all that we have done. ”

Miss Flint, looking more grey and more like a steel man-trap than usual, stepped forward :

“ Really,” she said, “ if there had been nothing else, we had every reason for putting an end to what was going on. Crosses and wreaths, and flowers, and mummary, and superstition of the most abject and degrading kind.”

“ No, no,” exclaimed Miss Ellen Green, who had joined her friends ; “ you are going too far, dear Miss Flint. I know that Dissenters, however, do not approve of ceremonial, and can understand your objections. At the same time, I must say that nothing but the urgent entreaties of Miss Kimberley Finch, and the telegraphed request of our poor Nora’s friends, would have induced me to consent to the hasty removal on Monday evening.

“ There are some things connected with the past two days,” she added, with a sob, “ that have troubled me even more than Nora’s death.”

Miss Crayston was disarmed by this speech and the lady’s emotion. Miss Ellen Green bowed her head as her tears fell fast.

Bertie, who had been unnoticed, even if perceived by the elder ladies, now stepped forward. Her face looked as if a white light played over it, quivering on the rosy lips and adding lustre

to the gray eyes which gleamed forth large and dark.

“I don’t know what you mean :” she said. “I don’t know why you have done this thing. I don’t understand what Miss Kimberley Finch or any one else has to say to it. Surely you believe that life and death are from God. He sent death to us here, in this house, with a message for us ; for us, the girls you speak of. How can you act as if there was no God, as if he had not spoken, or as if he did not know and had not weighed the meaning of his message to us ? How dare you take the lovely white form he had left to us ? She was so beautiful we could not be frightened ; even I could not, who have never seen death, and have dreaded it ; but there was a smile on her lips, such a happy smile. How dare you steal her away ? Oh God, the noise, and the horror, and the darkness !”

“Hush, Bertie, hush :” said Miss Crayston, seizing the hands which Bertie had suddenly thrown out with convulsive energy, and leading her away. “Hush, my child ; God is here, and in this act also. Do not wrong the dead by your anger and your fears.”

“I will not hush :” exclaimed Bertie, breaking away and returning to the ladies ; “I will not

be silent. See," she said, "I am one of those *dear girls* you speak of, confided to your charge. Do you know what I think of this thing that you have done?"

"What *thing*?" asked Miss Flint. "Be good enough to speak like a rational person, and don't let your temper completely master you. What *thing* do you mean?"

The words spoken in a sharp, disagreeable tone did more to calm Bertie than Miss Crayston's gentle entreaty. She looked earnestly from one to the other, and for a few moments there was silence. Miss Ellen Green, who really had a heart, although from long neglect it was available only for the mechanical functions which she was trying to persuade herself to be all that was required from it, Miss Ellen Green was whispering in a deprecating tone to Miss Flint; whilst Mrs. Armstrong opened and closed her bag uneasily, and fingered a letter, as if doubtful whether it might not be applied judiciously. Miss le Mesurier walked to the window, and Miss Crayston reseated herself at the table, and her head was bowed down.

"I am sorry," said Bertie; and every slow and resonant word fell upon the silence like a sob, "I am sorry if I have spoken hastily. What

I mean is, that when I tell the girls about Nora's death, how she was confided to us to love her and tend her for the absent, to show her all reverence and all tenderness ; when I tell them this, and they find that her death was concealed from them, and she was sent away to—to—to—to that railway station that they might dance and sing and enjoy themselves. Ah !” she exclaimed, throwing herself on her knees before a chair and covering her face with her hands, “I shall never be happy again. Why did we let them do it ! Why did we not put a stop to it !”

“Miss Ravenshaw !” exclaimed Miss Flint, in a savage tone. “Now pray, Miss Ellen, do not interrupt me. This young lady wants a lesson, and she shall have one. Miss Ravenshaw, you forget yourself, and very much overrate your own importance. As to what you would have done, you must understand that neither you nor the person you allude to has any power in this institution. You could no more have prevented what the committee had decided upon than”—she looked round for a simile, and the sound of wheels fell upon her ear, “than that cab horse. I am extremely sorry to find that you have never learnt respect for authority, though it is no more than your antecedents have led me to expect.

Your lesson now will be more difficult than it would have been had your home been different. I desire you to go to your room at once, and to remain there until you receive permission from the ladies' committee to leave it."

Miss Crayston started to her feet; Bertie did not move.

"Tragic airs don't move me:" continued Miss Flint, as if in reply to the look of the Lady Resident. "You, Miss Crayston, are one servant of the college and I am another, and if you don't know your duty I do."

"I always knew you were a servant:" said the Lady Resident, coldly, and there was silence; but two of the ladies turned away and smiled. It was not in human nature to witness the discomfiture of Miss Flint unmoved.

The Lady Resident went to Bertie and put her hand upon the glossy hair. Bertie took the hand and kissed it passionately:

"I know," she said, "I know, my dear, dear mistress, what you mean, and what you wish me to do I will obey; but you must let me speak——if I can."

The young girl rose, and with a still, white face walked up to Miss Flint.

"I will tell you how I would have prevented

your party if you had not listened to me and postponed it: I would have gone to every Professor, and all the parents and the pupils. Nora is dead, I would have said; she died away from all her friends. She is lying with white flowers upon her breast, waiting till the poor mother comes to see her. And if after that any one had tried to come to your party to laugh, and talk, and sing, I would have locked the doors and bolted them, and refused admission. You have done a cruel and a wicked thing. You do not understand a woman's heart if you think there is one girl who will not say so. I don't know what you mean by respect for authority, and that I have not learnt respect and obedience. How dare you imply blame upon my parents and my home? But that is like you; the absent and the dead, those you can assail."

Bertie's pale, passionate face quivered with emotion.

"You are impertinent, Miss Ravenshaw, as well as disrespectful; and though you talk so glibly about the dead it seems to me that the sight of death has had very little effect upon you."

"Dying is not such a hard thing," exclaimed Bertie, throwing back her head. "I could die

easily enough. I would rather die than live in a low, mean, pitiful world. Only think of it! afraid of a poor dead girl, and the terror she may inspire; ready to tell one lie or a hundred to hush it all up, as if death was something to be ashamed of; not afraid of God, not afraid to try and cheat us into mockery and mirth, to circumvent his will, and trick us, and entice us to an evening party! Oh, it is pitiful!" said Bertie, in her proud passion.

"My child:" said a low voice close to her. She turned and saw Mrs. Brownlow: "My dear child!" and arms thrown wide offered a haven of refuge. She trembled, and, weeping, clung to her friend.

"This young lady's place is manifestly the stage:" exclaimed Miss Flint, sharply.

Miss Crayston, pale and tearful, took the young girl's hand:

"Come, darling," she said, "come to my room; and perhaps Mrs. Brownlow will come with you. Bertie has had too great a trial," she added, turning gravely to the other ladies, "for such a loving, reverent nature. I will return as soon as I can leave her."

Bertie had now completely broken down, and was sobbing aloud. Professor Walmsley came

in, looked uncomfortable, and retreated hastily. Fynes passed them with a keen glance. Mr. Brownlow lingered at the door. He divined the cause of Bertie's trouble. Maud Crompton entered the office: she was one of Bertie's friends:

"Oh, Bertie, what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Nora Stewart is dead!" said Bertie, in passionate, resonant tones. "She died——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, resolutely, putting her hand before Bertie's mouth and drawing her away.

No one spoke, and Maud withdrew to the waiting-room.

A moment later there was a loud exclamation from many voices, and then silence.

"There," said Miss Flint. "Now it will spread all over Minster. Just what we wanted to avoid."

"A very undisciplined nature," remarked Miss le Mesurier, sententiously, "an ill-regulated mind; just the person always ready to break out into acts of insubordination, a most undesirable influence in a place like this."

Mrs. Armstrong was fidgety, and much occupied with her bag and a packet of letters.

“Some one should go into the waiting-room,” she said, “to correct false impressions which might prove injurious to the college.”

“It comes to this:” exclaimed Miss le Mesurier, striking her umbrella on the floor, “Miss Ravenshaw and Miss Crayston must go. Did you notice the look Walmsley and Brownlow gave us as they passed the door and saw that girl crying? A pretty time we shall have with *them* at the meeting next Wednesday!”

“Don’t you think we may rely upon Fynes?” asked Miss Ellen Green with some hesitation.

“Rely upon none of them:” retorted Miss le Mesurier. “As Miss Kimberley Finch says, we shall never attain the position to which we have a right, nor secure from the college that which is our due, so long as woman governs by the mere influence of personal attraction and charm. That is the old low condition on which men have always consented to grant power and influence to a few women. We claim something higher; we assert the right of all women to equal power with men——”

“I know, I know:” interrupted Miss Ellen Green. She was beginning to wince under the Kimberley Finch dispensation, and had not quite forgotten the days of her youth; but Miss Flint

and Mrs. Armstrong, who had never known what it was to be pretty, were visibly edified, and held up their heads in a defiant manner.

In half an hour the ladies had agreed on the course to be adopted, and entered the waiting-room to converse with the students.

"Poor Nora!" said Mrs. Armstrong. "This is indeed sad news. Miss Ravenshaw is quite overcome."

"Where did Nora die?" asked Maud Crompton. "No one seemed to know anything about her last evening."

"I am sure she was not in the house on Sunday," said Lily Carter, "for I went to her room. It was empty, and Miss Flint told me she was so ill that she had been removed. Did she go to Bristol?"

"Her friends met her there:" answered Mrs. Armstrong. "She is there now."

"Then she is not dead?" said Lily Carter, looking relieved. "I thought Maud said she was dead!"

"I grieve to have to tell you that she is dead:" announced Miss Ellen Green, coming forward. "She died quite suddenly from heart disease."

"Telegraph, if you please, mum, answer paid:" said Gibson, advancing to Mrs. Armstrong.

“It is from poor Mrs. Stewart :” said Miss Ellen Green, looking up at the girls who stood silent as she read the telegram that Mrs. Armstrong passed to her. “She asks that some one should join her at Bristol.”

“Will you go ?” asked Miss le Mesurier.

“We must consider :” replied Mrs. Armstrong. “You see,” she added, in a low tone to her friends, “Miss Kimberley Finch is at Cheltenham, and she may—”

The remainder of the sentence was inaudible.

Bertie meantime was lying upon her bed with a white blossom pressed to her lips.

“Oh, Nora !” she sobbed, “dear Nora ! Do you know all, and do you forgive ?”

CHAPTER XVIII.

PORTHALLAN COVE.

A FEW weeks had elapsed, and Nora Stewart seemed to be forgotten. The managing ladies said from the first that they must beg to be spared all questions. Poor Nora was very dear to them, and her loss had caused them great sorrow. They could not refer to her death without pain, and their kind friends must say nothing on the subject.

Those who knew how liberally Miss Ellen Green had for many weeks supplied the sick girl with jellies, grapes, and delicacies of all kinds, were full of that lady's praises. Dr. Smart shook his head, said "Heart disease; nothing could be done for it!" and Minster received his dictum.

Bertie's emotion in the office had been noticed by the students of St. Mary's, and commented upon. They concluded that she had then

received the sad intelligence, and had been "overcome." The fact of having been "overcome" gave Bertie a certain sort of distinction, and girls who did not know her waited in the class-rooms to watch her as she passed the door.

"Don't allude to poor Nora:" was whispered from one to the other. "Miss Ravenshaw was quite overcome when she heard of her death."

It was indeed a subject that Bertie could not talk about. Miss Ellen Green had shown her Mr. Stewart's telegram, asking that the body of his daughter might be removed to Bristol, and she had seen Mrs. Stewart's letter of grateful thanks to all who had been good to her dear child. In it Miss Ravenshaw and Lily Carter were especially mentioned, and the mother sent to each a small gift in memory of Nora. Bertie saw that she had no right to attribute blame to the managing ladies for what had been done at the request of Nora's parents. And yet she could not help wondering whether the ladies would have acted differently if there had been no evening party at the college.

Miss Crayston found in the office a letter which, if it had reached her twenty-four hours sooner, would have informed her fully of all the arrangements made by the managing ladies. The

delay of this letter was never satisfactorily explained.

Miss Flint was apparently unmoved. She had seen too many girls, living and dead, so she said angrily one day to Miss Ellen Green, who was mourning over the recent event, to make such a fuss over one more or less.

Miss Ellen was so much annoyed by this remark that special application to Miss Kimberley Finch was needed to restore peace between the two ladies. Miss Finch wrote that "an inflexible sense of her own integrity" was the distinguishing characteristic of Miss Flint, and had been throughout her whole life. This greatly comforted Miss Ellen; at the same time she shook her head, and filled a small wicker basket with sandwiches and sweet-cake. Whenever she saw a girl look weary and yawn at her class, she watched for an opportunity of administering these restoratives. Her friends laughed at her, but she was undoubtedly popular among the girls. Lily Carter asserted that the sausage-rolls which Miss Ellen brought were "scrumptious," and that high tea at Tregarven was great fun. Many others said the same, and the extent of the appreciation bestowed on her kindly efforts led to such frequent invitations that Miss Flint

remonstrated, and said studies must not be interrupted. She found that her pupils thought more of Miss Ellen Green's photographs, sketches and accounts of foreign travel than they did of the lessons they had to prepare. Miss Ellen sighed and submitted. She submitted also to the decision of her colleagues that Miss Crayston must be removed from her post, and that Bertie Ravenshaw must either join the other boarders in the school-house or go home.

Mrs. Armstrong and Miss le Mesurier resolved to punish Bertie, and defeat "the machinations" of the Lady Resident. They determined to penetrate the mystery which shrouded Walmsley's visits to St. Mary's, and to ascertain the motives of Goldworthy Fynes. In carrying out this resolve they almost exhausted the patience of all concerned in their investigations; and when Mrs. Carter again begged Miss Crayston and Bertie to return with Lily one Friday, and stay with them at Trebarwith until the following Monday, the Lady Resident gratefully accepted the invitation.

The first evening in the hospitable Cornish house was spent quietly, sitting under the lime trees in the garden, watching the children at play, and making plans for the morrow. They

decided to go to Porthallan Cove, and explore the seals' cavern, of which Bertie had heard so much from Lily and Nora.

Early on the following morning Lily was ready with her pony carriage, a liberal hamper, and plenty of shawls and rugs, in case of rain. Miss Crayston, Bertie, and two of the Carter boys, Andrew and Willie, all contrived to find seats, and Lily drove gaily off. The little boys were to carry the hamper down the steep cliff to the shore, and to make themselves generally useful; but they had views of their own, and insisted on going to a cliff, two miles off, for young shags. Lily was afraid to let them go alone, so she reluctantly accompanied them, and warning Miss Crayston of the danger of the rising tide, pointed out the direction in which they would find the seals' cavern.

It was low tide when they set out, and they walked three quarters of a mile over rock and reef, and across firm yellow sand, to reach the silvery ripple of the sea. From thence they looked back at the line of cliff behind them: precipitous, stern, a fierce, impregnable guard of rock, with no inlet for ship or boat, no means of escape for those driven upon the low reefs, which stretched out like a shark's jaw towards the sea.

Isolated, lofty rocks, curious fretted arches worn by the waves, and great masses of boulder and heaped-up stones, made a picturesque foreground. There were innumerable pools of deep green water, fringed by sea anemones and the lovely aster-like tentacles of the anthea, whilst glittering prawns in gorgeous armour darted to and fro among the red sea-weed and the green. Bertie and her companions had stooped to admire them again and again on their way to the sands, and had remarked the depth of water in the pools around the base of the rocks. They decided to walk to the seals' cavern, beyond which Lily had informed them they could not pass; as the rocks jutted out into deep water even when the tide was low.

Miss Crayston preferred the sands, but Bertie, more adventurous, returned to the reefs and rocky foreground, leaping from stone to stone, and watching the changing colours of the cliff as the clouds passed over it. She wandered on until at a sudden turn in the coast a great white rock barred her way. The sun was shining full upon it, and it seemed to rise like a spirit out of the gloom in which she had been standing. She passed round it, and a long strip of sand lying between it and a barrier of steep inaccessible cliff

stretching out into the blue water, showed her that she had reached the entrance to the seals' cavern.

She followed the sand, and found herself at the mouth of a large cave, dark even at noontide, and with a sound of water dripping on all sides. The sand ceased, and the floor of the cavern became rocky, with large pools of shallow water. At the sides the action of the waves had worn away the softer parts of the stone, leaving ledges frequented by the seals which, in the winter, might be found resting there. On this lovely summer day Bertie looked in vain for the dog-like head and large eyes she had pictured to herself and hoped to discover. The ledges were empty, the pools deserted; dripping fronds of sea-weed hung from the roof, and Bertie saw that at high tide the cavern would be full of water. She looked above her and remembered hearing that at this part of the coast the tide rises twenty feet. As she sat on a large boulder she thought with a shudder of some poor creature struggling over the broken rocks and through the deep pools with the angry sea rushing onwards, and the savage cliff frowning above. She remembered Miss Crayston alone upon the sands, probably at some distance from her. "She will never notice the time,"

Bertie said to herself, "when she is at the margin of her beloved sea ; the tide will turn and she will miss this beautiful cave."

She rose from her seat, and as she went towards the sands a little stream of water came stealing towards her, with a soft ripple like a smile.

She watched it for a few moments with interest and almost amusement. It undermined the sands in an insidious way, and formed little channels of its own, with banks that crumbled and fell in, as ripple followed ripple, coming nearer and nearer to her, as she stood in the mouth of the cavern.

She looked at her watch, saw that it was more than two hours since she had left Miss Crayston ; and then it occurred to her that long ago the tide had turned, and that it was now coming in. She stepped hastily forward, and found that it was just possible, by leaping from stone to stone, to get round the white rock, and escape the danger of the seals' cavern. When she had reached a place of safety she stood still for a moment to consider her position. She remembered reef after reef of rocks, varying from ten to thirty and forty feet in height, separated each from the other by a sandy bay, and near the cliff by huge

boulders ; easy walking and delightful climbing at low tide, but now, with that ominous rush in her ears, and with the sound of loose stones knocking and crashing together, an arduous task. She saw spray rising against the foot of the reef nearest to her. It would be impossible to pass round that. She must climb it at some point, or find her way through the caverns and arches. She had a wise instinct to avoid the parts nearer the cliff where she might be hemmed in, and to keep to the open, and trust to her sure and rapid feet. She had no fear ; it did not occur to her that she was in actual danger, but she saw that she must make haste. “ Now, girls, look sharp : ” my father would say, if he was here, thought Bertie, and so she hastened across the bay to the next reef, crossing the wet sands and climbing easily to the summit. There she paused and looked around : the sands were covered, and she saw that the pools by the side of this reef were too deep to allow her to step into them, and too broad to get over. She must go up towards the cliff, and make her way across the boulders. Never mind ; no doubt the next would be easier. But this was not the case. Once or twice she slipped on the wet rock ; once the thought occurred to her that one might be drowned

among these stones ; and then a fear for the safety of Miss Crayston crossed her mind. What had become of her ! Where could she be ! Surely it was impossible that she was sitting underneath some lofty rock among those she had passed, and unconscious of danger. Bertie felt that she must return, search the two bays she had crossed, and make sure that she had not left her friend in peril. But a moment's thought reassured her. Miss Crayston would certainly be looking out for her, "unless she is still at the edge of the sea watching the blue waves," she thought with a smile, "and then she will see and hear nothing else, but will just retreat before the tide. No fear ; I shall find her." So saying she scaled another reef, and scanned in vain another bay. The difficulty of her way was increasing, the leaps from stone to stone were longer ; she was compelled to climb over huge masses of rock which on her way to the seals' cavern she had walked round. Nowhere was Miss Crayston to be seen, and yet Bertie knew that somewhere she was waiting for her ; somewhere, in a cave, on a rock, by the sea. The thought recurred again and again, and each time her anxiety increased. She called Miss Crayston's name aloud, shouting so that the sea-birds heard and seemed to answer.

She climbed almost breathless to the summit of a reef, to be once again disappointed. She hesitated from the feeling that she ought to go back, that she dared not leave unexplored a single spot behind her. And then the rush of the sea around the stones, and the noise of water in her ears, showed her how grave was the danger of her position.

“Helen, Helen:” she shouted. The tears started to her eyes for a moment, as for the first time she uttered the Christian name of her friend, and a wave of emotion, of passionate affection, passed over her. “Helen, Helen:” she continued to call, hurrying onwards, startled sometimes with the loudness of her own voice and the echoes from the cliff; but there was no answer, no sign that any human being shared with her the dangers of that coast. A perilous reef, the very worst she had to encounter, separated her from a bay which she knew to be near the point whence they had started. She remembered walking round it, noticing certain marks which seemed as if steps had been cut in it, and calculating the chances of a successful climb to the summit. Miss Crayston had asked her not to attempt it, and they had passed round the sands where now

the waves were hurrying in and sending spray that drenched her and made her footing slippery and uncertain. She reached the summit in safety, and there, on a slip of yellow sand, walking away from Bertie as she stood and watched, and with garments fluttering in the wind, was Miss Crayston.

“Just what I expected!” thought Bertie, who immediately became practical and calm. “How is she to get over the next reef, and how am I to reach her?” It was a question that might well be asked, for between the Lady Resident and her pupil lay a deep pool of green water stretching across the bay. The sands on which Miss Crayston was walking were high and firm, and she had not noticed that her retreat was cut off. Bertie found that near the rocks the water was now so deep she could not step into it, but must make her way back to the loose stones near the cliff and from them wade to the pool. All anxiety ceased as soon as she saw Miss Crayston; she knew they were near the starting-place, only one more bay to cross, two more rocky reefs, and they were in safety. She stepped into the pool, which was fed rapidly by a stream of salt-water pouring in from the sea along the side of the reef.

She emerged dripping on the dry sands, and Miss Crayston, who had turned, exclaimed with astonishment :

“Why, Bertie, you are wet to the waist !”

“Yes,” said Bertie with a smile ; “and I shall be wet to the shoulders going back.”

“What do you mean ?”

“The tide is in. We have not a moment to lose !”

“Have you lost time looking for me ?” asked the Lady Resident, becoming suddenly pale.

“No ; I have hurried as I should not otherwise have done, except for the thought of you.”

“Can we escape ?”

“Oh yes, quite easily ; but you must let me carry you. The water will be too deep for you !”

“I cannot think of such a thing. I can wade quite well, or if need be I can swim.”

“You can’t swim in your clothes. We have not a moment to lose. I have often carried Ethel, who is taller than you. Come on.”

Bertie seized her, saying,

“Perch on my shoulder if you can ; there are some nasty stones, and I shall be glad to have my hands free.”

Miss Crayston saw that resistance was useless

and submitted. Bertie took her safely across the deepest part ; she got down and waded as soon as it was shallow, and thus they reached the stones.

"Now we are all right:" said Miss Crayston with a sigh of relief.

"Not at all:" replied Bertie ; "we must get over this ridge somehow, and across the next bay ; and it seems to me as if the toughest bit of work comes at the end."

"It is impossible to get over these stones," exclaimed Miss Crayston. "We must wait till the tide goes down."

"It will wash over them:" replied Bertie, gravely, who was aiding her companion and moving forward as they spoke ; "and when the waves break amongst them and over them, the sea will sweep even the rocks it does not cover ; you can see that by the mussels and the seaweed. Look up there, high above our heads."

Miss Crayston paused. She gazed all around, and turned eagerly to the black and threatening cliff, a sheer wall of rock.

"You are right, Bertie:" she said quietly, though there was a slight tremor in her voice. "Go first, and I will follow."

"Which way do you think we ought to go?"

asked Bertie, who shrank from assuming the first place.

"You know best, dear. Take whichever way you prefer, and let me follow without a word. We may yet escape if we lose no time."

But the sea was tossing angrily among the stones. It was difficult to reach the reef; almost impossible to climb it. When they reached the summit they saw a sandy strip of shore far away, then a stretch of sea washing up to the huge boulders, which they both remembered as lying at the foot of the cliffs, and among which they had watched the anthea and the prawns.

"Over this one bay and across the next reef and we are safe:" said Bertie. "We will go along the reef, and get down among the boulders."

They were crawling cautiously along the reef, and descending as they crawled, when they heard a human voice, shriek upon shriek, rising above the din of waters, in their ears.

They paused and looked towards the cliff. High above them, and close to the edge, stood Lily Carter, screaming, throwing out her arms, uttering inaudible words.

"Stop," said Miss Crayston; "she is trying to direct us."

"No, no ; let us go on : " urged Bertie.

"See, she wants us to go out upon the sands !"

Miss Crayston pointed to the sands, and they could see Lily kiss her hands, nod her head, make signs of approval, and then she stretched her arm out to the right.

"I know : " exclaimed Miss Crayston. "We are to go to the sands, and help will come."

"What help ? " said Bertie. "There is no boat within eight miles. Lily told me so."

"See, Bertie dear, how she urges it ; depend on it there is danger here of which she knows."

"Very well," replied Bertie. "But what are we to do when the tide covers that strip of sand ? The waves are already beating against the reef."

"Lily may know that these boulders which we should have to climb form an impassable barrier to the next bay : " urged Miss Crayston.

"Perhaps so. It seems like it : " replied Bertie, rather sadly, and then with a flush of colour she added,

"Come along. We can get across this broad pool to the sands ; and see, there is a good high bit of rock upon them. I am sure you are right. Lily knows what she is about."

Once again Bertie carried her companion

through the deep water. They reached the sands, and were crossing them, when, amidst the spray of the waves breaking at the foot of the reef, they saw a man riding at full speed, urging on his horse, and when he had succeeded in getting it through the breakers, coming towards them. He rode a large and powerful carriage horse, barebacked, and as he advanced he called out :

“Put up one before me, and the other must try to cross the reef as near as possible to the sea. There is no foothold whatever near the cliff.”

By this time he was close to them.

“Take this lady :” said Bertie, “and I will climb.”

“No, Bertie, I will never consent to that.”

“Let her try,” exclaimed the rescuer ; “my black Dan may carry you both if there is too much water round the reef. Lose no time. Help your friend :” he said to Bertie ; and between them both in an instant Miss Crayston was seated before him on the horse, and Bertie hastened towards the reef.

“The channel is deep and broad,” she cried, “and the sand so soft I sink to the knees.”

“Come back to this stone :” cried the horseman. “Can you get up behind me ?”

“Oh yes:” she replied.

He placed his horse beside the stone, and Bertie, using his foot as a stirrup, and with the help of his hand, sprang up behind him.

“Now hold on by me and sit steady. Black Dan won’t like that bit close to the reef, but I will take him rather further out where there is a safe rocky footing. Don’t be afraid:” he continued, as the horse started forward; “we are all right.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Bertie, “I shall be off. Wait a moment. Oh you must wait; indeed you must; only just one moment!”

He waited, glanced behind him, and the shadow of a smile crossed his face.

Bertie adjusted her position, and placed her two hands lightly on his shoulders.

“All right?” he asked.

“Quite right:” she replied, and they started again. The horse struggled bravely forwards, breasting the deep waves in gallant style, and urged on by his master’s hand, and voice, and knees. No word was spoken; Miss Crayston had turned her head and was looking back over the rider’s shoulder; her dark eyes, large with a new fear, were fixed on Bertie’s face. But Bertie, bright, eager, and alert, knew no fear.

There were a few moments of danger and uncertainty as a great wave rolled onward, lifting for an instant the horse and his burden. The poor beast trembled as he regained a footing; and with a loud shout the rider urged him forward, just in time to avoid the succeeding wave, which crashed against the reef they had now rounded, and drove them inland towards the harbour from whence they had started.

“Thank God we are safe!” exclaimed their deliverer.

“Stop a minute; I’ll get down:” said Bertie.

“No, no; wait till we reach the shore.”

“Please let me get off here. I’d much rather.”

He reined in his horse, and Bertie slipped down.

A few minutes later she was in Lily’s arms; Lily sobbing, trembling, and blaming herself for the disaster of her friends.

“Don’t cry, Lily. It has been most glorious. I never had a real adventure before.”

Miss Crayston advanced to them, white and still amidst her wet garments, whilst Bertie was shaking herself like a Newfoundland puppy. She took Bertie in her arms and kissed her tenderly. There was an anxious look in the eyes of the Lady Resident:

“Oh, Bertie,” she whispered, “Bertie, darling ! Did I see one of your feet on each side of the horse !”

“Indeed you did :” said Bertie, with a laugh and a blush ; “and pray, where should we all have been if you hadn’t ?”

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN DANGER IS OVER.

LILY CARTER sat at the foot of the cliff sobbing aloud. The Lady Resident knelt by Bertie's side, trying to wring the salt water out of that young lady's dripping clothes; their deliverer, having made temporary arrangements for the safety of his horse, returned:

"Come, Miss Carter, this will never do:" he said. "Can't you give your friends any assistance?"

"I have sent the boys to catch the pony:" said Lily, and a fresh burst of tears stopped further explanation.

"I don't think that is the first thing to be done."

"I can't help it, indeed I can't. I don't know what I am to do."

"Well, you can walk a little way with me:" he said, taking both hands and raising her from

the ground. He led her some little distance and then paused. Lily looked at him with swimming eyes, and sobbed forth :

“It is all my fault ; I have nearly killed them both. I shall never forgive myself. I shall never be happy again.”

“Just now you must think of your friends, and not even of your own faults. Of course it has been a terrible trial for you to witness their danger, but just imagine what it has been for these two brave girls to endure. The tall one is the grandest creature I ever saw, and that little dark-eyed one is full of pluck and presence of mind. I shall never forget the way she took hold of me and said, ‘You want both hands ; I am quite safe !’ And so she was. It was so sensible of her not to put her arms round my neck and drag me down, and begin to cry. If both hands had not been free I don’t believe I should have got Black Dan round the reef.”

“That is not a girl, Mr. Tredwen ; that is the Lady Resident.”

“She is very young, isn’t she ?”

“Oh, no ; she is nearly twenty-six years old.”

“Is she, really ! A great age, isn’t it ? Well, now you are going to walk over that strip of sand, and when we come back we must consider

how to treat the Lady Resident with hospitality and attention."

He led her towards the sea, off which a strong cool wind was blowing. In a few moments she paused :

"How can I be walking about here:" she exclaimed. "I ought to be helping them."

"Well, perhaps you ought:" he replied.

"Please tell me what to do. I have sent the boys to get the pony-carriage ready as soon as possible."

"You must not think of driving them twelve miles in their wet clothes; and that old pony will take three hours to get over the ground."

"But what can we do?"

"Take them to the Gipsy's Cave, see how the sun is shining in on the dry warm sand, wrap them in rugs, and give them something to eat and drink."

"To be sure, I ought to have thought of that at once:" replied Lily, and she hurried back to her friends, saying,

"I am all right now, Miss Crayston; do forgive me, and please come just round the corner to the Gipsy's Cave. All our things are there, and it is beautifully warm."

Bertie looked rather pale, and Miss Crayston

noticed that she did not walk very steadily. When they overtook Lily they found that young lady on her knees before a hamper.

"See! here are the sandwiches, and this is cider; it is home-made, and quite as good as champagne. You must have something at once."

"I couldn't just now:" said Bertie, turning from the food with a shudder.

Miss Crayston had espied a bottle of milk. She poured out a glass and gave it to Bertie.

"That is delicious:" said Bertie; "but you must have some also."

"I prefer the wine:" said Miss Crayston, pouring the remainder of the milk into Bertie's glass.

"We cannot leave for a long time," said Lily, without further explanation; "so if you two will take off your wet clothes, I will give you the bath towels we brought for the boys, and you can rub yourselves dry. I will put all the things out on the stones; the wind and sun will soon dry them."

"What are we to wear?" laughed Bertie.

"Oh, the rugs and the shawls and the water-proofs will do beautifully; and you can lie here in the sun."

"A capital plan," exclaimed Miss Crayston.

"Bertie, we will take your things off at once. Your hands are very cold."

"It is nothing. I have a great dispensation of sleep upon me ; and if I lie down I know I shall go to sleep."

"The very best thing you can do. But we must first get off your wet clothes."

"It is of no use ; there is nothing dry about me, not even my hair. My hat is blown away. I have lost all my hair-pins, and I have called you Helen. Nothing will do me any harm, I assure you. Do take off your things first:" and she threw her arms round Miss Crayston's neck and kissed her in rather an excited way.

"My dear girl, you carried me through the deep water:" said the Lady Resident. "I am not nearly so wet as you are, and you must do as I tell you."

A few minutes later Bertie, clad in a water-proof, with a warm rug fastened round her waist, and many shawls about her, was lying at the entrance of the cave.

Lily, who had disappeared in answer to a signal, now returned :

"See," she said, "Mr. Tredwen sent the boys to his waggonette for rugs and cushions. We have plenty of them now, and can make Bertie

more comfortable. They arranged a pillow, threw a carriage rug over her, and almost before the arrangements were complete, Bertie was asleep.

"Is she going to be ill?" asked Lily, anxiously.

"Not at all. She sleeps away fatigue and excitement in the most wonderful manner."

"Miss Crayston," said Lily, "I have taken off my dress and jacket, and will you please put them on whilst I dry yours. Mother always allows us to run about in a petticoat after we have bathed, and you needn't think it will hurt me."

Lily made the request with so much hesitation and humility, and so manifest a tendency to tears, that the Lady Resident was moved to compliance.

"Yes, I will accept your offer with thanks. Your skirt will be quite long enough for me. I hope you will not take cold."

"No fear of it:" replied Lily, delighted to find that her offer was accepted, and she was allowed to make a slight sacrifice for her friends. "I will get some hot sand for your feet, and for Bertie's too, whilst the shoes and stockings are drying."

Miss Crayston reclined against the side of the cave, and watched her pupil as she slept. Lily

carried away their wet garments and spread them out to dry, placing stones to prevent them from being blown away. She heaped hot, dry sand on Bertie's feet, who smiled in her sleep as it was done; and then in a whisper she informed Miss Crayston that she would go and give the boys their dinner.

The sunlight dancing on the sea, the warm air, the regular breaking of the waves, and her previous fatigue, caused the Lady Resident also to fall asleep; she was aroused an hour later by the noise of children clattering down the zigzag from the cliff above with wooden pails and shovels. When she opened her eyes she saw four children standing at the mouth of the cave staring at her and Bertie. The eldest, a boy of eight years old, was pushed by a little girl behind him. He turned round and gave her a blow which knocked her down amongst the sand and stones.

There was a loud cry. Bertie opened her eyes.

"It is nothing," said Miss Crayston, "only a child crying. Go to sleep again."

Bertie closed her eyes, and two nurses, who had followed the children, led them away towards the sea. A boy of four years old escaped un-

noticed, and returned to the cave. Seating himself at Bertie's feet he patted the mound of sand that covered them, and began to ornament it with shells and stones. As he worked in silence Miss Crayston did not disturb him. She gave him a piece of seed cake. He did not eat, but crumbled and spread it over the sand. Miss Crayston left him and joined Lily, who was busy folding the clothes which were already dry, and preparing to carry them to the cave.

"What are your plans, Lily?"

"Mr. Tredwen has sent Andrew to his house. It is four miles nearer than ours, and the pony will go quickly with Andrew. Mr. Tredwen has sent for a carriage for us and another horse for his waggonette."

"I hope that horse was not injured?"

"Oh no; but they cannot take it round the reefs to the cliff road till the tide goes down. No horse can get up or down the zigzag."

"Shall we have a long distance to walk over the cliffs?"

"No; the Tredwen children have got a jingle, the little Cornish cart I have told you about. You can go over the cliff to the carriage road in it. It is drawn by a donkey which is very strong; and you know a jingle can go anywhere."

"I am afraid we are giving Mr. Tredwen a great deal of trouble."

"He doesn't mind it; he is very pleased to help us. He has arranged everything beautifully. But do tell me if Bertie will be ill?"

"I don't think she is at all likely to be ill. She has been sleeping most peacefully, and will be quite refreshed when she awakes."

Meanwhile the small child, left to his own devices, advanced from Bertie's feet to her head. He first of all sprinkled sand over her hair, and then, sitting down upon her chest, he commenced to poke sand into her mouth.

"Oh, dear!" said Bertie, starting up. She threw off her incubus, and he, with a loud cry, flung himself upon her, and struck her in the face.

Miss Crayston and Lily hurried to the cave, and a nurse darted upon the child and dragged him away, kicking and screaming as he went.

"Take him away:" called Bertie; "do, pray take him away!"

"He is gone, dear. Don't be afraid."

"Oh, but pray take him away from that woman. Just hear how she is thumping his poor little back."

"And serve him right too:" said Lily. "He ought to have a thorough good whipping."

"My father says there is no such thing as a *good* whipping," said Bertie; "and I begin to agree with him. They are always bad. How can the mother allow a servant to beat her child?"

"The mother is dead:" said Lily. "They are Oliver Tredwen's children. I will go and speak to the nurse."

Bertie sat up and looked about her.

"Here come the rest of them:" exclaimed Miss Crayston in dismay. "They are the very naughtiest imps I ever saw."

The imps were whispering as they approached the cave, and two little girls came up to Bertie.

"Kiss me:" said the youngest, and Bertie, always well-disposed towards children, turned towards her.

The child rapidly licked the young girl's cheek with a tongue covered with some brown, sticky sweetmeat, and then burst into a loud laugh.

"Kiss me too:" shouted the elder girl, showing a dirty tongue.

"Horrid children!" said Bertie, wiping her cheek.

Miss Crayston took a hand of each girl, and led them away with such rapidity and determination that they had no chance of resisting.

"Nurse," she said, "these little girls are exceedingly ill-behaved. I cannot allow them to remain with us, and you had better take their brother away also."

"They're the most owdacious children," said nurse, shaking them violently, "as ever was."

"They really are too naughty for anything:" said Lily, advancing; "and, nurse, you must please keep them all out of the way whilst the ladies dress, and until we go home."

"Bertie," she continued, advancing to the cave, "the clothes are quite dry. You must make haste and dress. Mr. Tredwen has lighted a fire, the kettle is boiling, and we are going to have some tea."

"That will be delicious:" said both ladies; and before long they were drinking hot tea out of little mugs, whilst Mr. Oliver Tredwen was carrying backwards and forwards a large black kettle.

"Can we have a second cup?" asked Lily.

"Oh, yes! I made it quite full:" he replied. "Tea is the best thing you can take, and our Cornish way of making it is a very good one. When the kettle boils," he said, turning to Miss Crayston, "you shake in a handful or two of tea, and you find it goes on improving in strength and flavour as you drink."

“I have no doubt of it:” she replied; “but I think we must not try to get to the bottom of that kettle to-day. I should like to set our faces homewards as soon as Lily is ready.”

“I am ready now:” said Lily, and they climbed the steep zigzag to the summit of the cliff.

CHAPTER XX.

DAY DREAMS.

ON the following morning Bertie was pale and languid. She had passed a feverish and troubled night, haunted by the terrors of the Cornish coast. Out of the deep caverns of sleep, cruel dog-headed beasts sprang forth to seize her; long filaments of gigantic anthea curled upwards from the sea-green pools, and writhed around her; treacherous rocks glided beneath her weight to the edge of a steep precipice. The thunderous sound of the sea was in her ears, gigantic waves seemed to break over her, and draw her, weak and incapable of resistance, backwards and downwards to great depths of ocean, where gleamed the white still form of the Lady Resident.

“I think,” said Miss Crayston, after the Sunday morning breakfast, “that Bertie ought to sit in the garden instead of going to church.”

“It will be much the best thing, and we will

leave her quite alone:" said Mrs. Carter. "I will send out some rugs and chairs, and have them put under the chestnut trees. She can sleep, or read, or doze, as she likes."

Bertie protested that it was unnecessary, and that she would like the walk of two miles to the village church. But when she saw the arrangements made for her, the easy-chair under a spreading tree, the little table by its side, and a few books, she was quickly reconciled to her lot.

"Come and see, Miss Crayston, what I have got:" she said: "*Blair's Sermons*, and *Povah*, and *Young's Night Thoughts*. Ah, yes, I thought so, and *Good Words*, the first thing asked for by the Pitcairn islanders."

"Well, don't you agree with the islanders?"

"Oh, yes. I don't read it myself, but my father says *Good Words* is a British institution."

The children came up one by one to say good-bye to Bertie, and each child brought her a flower or a posy.

"This is what I always take to church with me:" said a lass of six years old. "*We* call it Lad's Love, but nurse says it is Old Man. I squeeze it up and make it smell, to keep me awake in sermon time."

"I like lavender best," said an elder sister,

"it's more prickly. We have a halfpenny if we keep awake all through the sermon:" she added.

"I got a penny for long words last Sunday:" said Paul, a boy of seven.

"What long words?" asked Bertie.

"In the sermon. If we remember six we get a penny; but we mustn't write them down, and they must be very long. My six were, transubstantiation, omnipresent, sacerdotal, schismatic, secularization, and genuflexion."

"What was the sermon about?" enquired Bertie.

"Why, about *them*, to be sure:" said Ada, the little girl who had first spoken; "and I should have got my penny too, but papa wouldn't have *co-eternal*. He says it's too easy; but I'm sure I don't a bit know what it means."

"Come, children!" called the parents, and the children ran off, looking back to nod to Bertie.

"I'll remember you a long word all for yourself:" said Paul.

When they had gone Bertie folded her hands and leant back in her chair. The day was sweet and bright, the air pleasant, and the garden gay, and yet friendly. Not far from where she sat a tall hedge of fuchsias, with graceful, drooping sprays weighed down by purple flowers and

black fruit, separated the lawn from the kitchen-garden. She could smell the sweet bean blossoms, and hear the murmur of innumerable bees. Ring-doves in a dove-cote near at hand were cooing, and from time to time the sharp bark of a little yard-dog fell upon her ear. When it ceased she could have fancied herself absolutely alone, for there was no sign or sound of human life in the house or garden. She took up a volume of Povah's Sermons, but a few minutes later laid it on her lap and closed her eyes.

She slept, and once more she stood on the Porthallan shore. The sea was calm. She had no fear; some one was with her, a large form, friendly, protecting. She opened her eyes, and on a chair at a little distance from her sat Mr. Philip le Mesurier.

She started; he came forward, and spreading a hand wide open, took hers in a grasp so comprehensive that, as she informed Miss Crayston afterwards, it made her feel as if he meant to put the hand in his pocket.

"I heard of your adventure from Tredwen:" he said. "I was with him last night. I have walked over this morning to enquire for you and Miss Crayston. Have I disturbed you? Do you wish to sleep?"

"No ; I would rather be awake. When I sleep I am by the sea of yesterday."

"Just so:" he replied. "Consciousness clears the mind. It is largely porous, and full of blanks and oblivious for what is not pleasant."

"That is my experience:" said Bertie. "I am often frightened in my sleep, but never when I am awake."

"That is because consciousness is the theatre of mental elimination, and your mind tends to consciousness."

"That sounds very mysterious:" said Bertie.

"Not so. Think of it in this way: consciousness is the skin of the human mind. The soul often goes outside the skin and beyond the circumference of the body, for the relation between them, though permanent, is liberal. When you return from unconscious sleep to the consciousness of your waking hours you return within the boundaries of your apprehension, and can reject that which disturbs you."

Bertie was silent.

"Have I puzzled you?"

"Just a little:" she replied. "I was trying to remember what you said at Mrs. Brownlow's about personality being skin and impersonality substance. What you say now seems to contradict it."

“Just so. But you remember that I told you impersonality was a substance which was no substance without the skin to hold it.”

“Oh, yes ; and of course that is very important. But,” she added, with some hesitation, “if consciousness is the skin, and personality also the skin, I suppose they mean the same thing. I am afraid I am very dense ; and when you talk to me I always wish for a dear friend who would understand you.”

“Oh, do you ?” he said coldly.

Bertie blushed deeply. It was her first attempt at match-making, and she did not feel sure how people began to try and interest any one in a stranger. Mr. Philip noticed the blush, and was silent. He felt rather angry with Bertie. No doubt she wished for some garrulous college boy, one of those his sister talked about.

“I should like you to see my friend :” she said with a great effort.

Mr. Philip made no reply.

“I think you would like her ;” and Bertie looked up at him rather timidly.

“I am sure I should :” he answered, with more eagerness than the statement seemed to require. “Tell me about this dear friend whom I am pre-disposed to admire.”

"She is very, very good:" said Bertie; "and your views make me think of her very often. She is almost a spiritualist already, and would not only listen with great sympathy, but would understand you much better than I do. I am trying to remember all you say, to tell her about it. She is a dear friend of my parents, and now she is our governess at home; I mean of the younger ones. We are all very fond of her. I wish you could see her."

"There is nothing I should like better:" he replied with alacrity; "and I shall take the earliest opportunity of making her acquaintance."

Bertie was pleased, and smiled at him.

At this moment the sound of approaching voices made known that the family had returned from church. Mr. and Mrs. Carter came forward to greet Mr. Philip.

"Have you heard about yesterday?" asked Mrs. Carter.

"Yes; Tredwen told me. He will be here shortly."

"You know something of everything, Mr. Philip. Can you tell me what would be good for Miss Ravenshaw?"

"Indeed, I am quite well, Mrs. Carter. Pray

don't be anxious; I have had a very happy morning, and am quite well."

Mr. Philip drew his chair to her side.

"I should like to feel your pulse:" he said, taking her hand. "The wave and shock of passions as they advance towards the body," he remarked to Mrs. Carter, as he consulted his watch, "are transmitted through the pulse. These modified vibrations speak a language of their own which is unintelligible to the ordinary observer. To the initiated few the pulse traces a diagram, and the secrets of life and death are written on its mountain-peaks, its deep abysses, and in its awful moments of silence."

Bertie was certainly impressed as Mr. Philip lightly touched her wrist with two large fingers; for the home practitioner felt a pulse and said nothing about it.

"I should like a wine-glass," continued Mr. Philip, "a tea-spoon, *clear, cold* water, and a sheet of note-paper."

Silence prevailed, and the children gathered round as he took from his pocket a small leather case, and carefully selected a minute bottle, which he held between his finger and thumb.

"My remedies," he said, turning to Bertie, "deal with the spirits of things, which are their

potential forms. This *veratrum*, for example, is destined to attack and destroy the great material curse of our age, namely, vaccination."

Now a woman who is afraid of nothing else will be afraid of small-pox; and Bertie, with a shudder, exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Philip!"

"Don't be alarmed:" he interposed kindly; "you are not threatened with any evil. *Veratrum* is not merely a special remedy, it is a curative personality, ready to do battle with all our ills. It is as a curative personality that I prescribe it. You will take," he added, as he shook three globules into the palm of his hand and put them into a tumbler of water, "you will take, Miss Ravenshaw, a tea-spoonful of this mixture every eight hours. I will put a piece of paper," and he laid it on the top of the wine-glass and bent it carefully down and round the rim, "a piece of paper to keep out dust, which is degrading and abhorrent."

Turning from Bertie, he addressed Mrs. Carter:

"Generous diet," he said, "cheerful society, and fresh air will complete the cure, and fit our young friend for her studies to-morrow morning."

There was a large, luminous look in Miss

Crayston's eyes, as she watched the scene, which Bertie understood, and for the first time resented.

"She is laughing at him:" thought Bertie, "and it is too bad."

The children gathered round the little table and watched the tiny white specks in the glass.

"Take care!" exclaimed their father. "That's a most dangerous mixture. Stand back, and I'll administer a dose to Miss Ravenshaw."

"Not now:" interposed Mrs. Carter, who saw that Mr. Philip did not like her husband's joke, "not now. We are going to dinner. Will you join us, Mr. Philip?"

Mr. Philip declined. He was on a visit to a friend in the neighbourhood with whom he must dine, but he arranged to meet the Carters for their evening walk, and to bring with him Mr. Tredwen.

"Miss Crayston, we have not taken half enough care of you:" said Mr. Carter, at the close of the day. "You have been doing everything for everybody all day long, in that quiet way of yours. As to your going off this evening to the Keeve to gather osmund-royal, and tell those children a story, I won't hear of it."

"Miss Crayston shall stay with me:" interposed Mrs. Carter. "No, my dears, Miss Crayston will

not tell you any more stories to-day. You have had quite enough."

"I only wish I could tell them one:" exclaimed the father, "their consciences want rousing; and if I knew how to put it, there is a fine story somewhere of boys who wouldn't obey their sister, and went off over the cliff for eggs and sea-birds, and led everybody into danger."

Two boys hung their heads and disappeared from the group standing round Miss Crayston.

"Andrew is very sorry, papa, and so is Willy, too:" said one of their sisters. "Andrew has been thinking about Bertie all day; and we want the osmund for her, because she never saw it growing, and she is going to plant it at St. Mary's."

"And, papa, he remembered the very longest word in the sermon for her," added another girl. "I helped him. It was ter-gi-ver-sation. We have been saying it over, and Miss Crayston is quite astonished."

"Mr. Tredwen is going to the Keeve," exclaimed a third, "and so is Mr. Philip; and Bertie *wants* to go. We shan't dig up the osmund-royal to-day, because it is Sunday; but Bertie is going to put little bits of white paper on all the roots she would like to have, and then Andrew and Willie will get them at four o'clock to-morrow morning."

“The children are really sorry:” pleaded the mother; “and I think Lily cried all night long. I have had to send her to lie down.”

“She knew the danger of that shore, and I can find no excuse for her:” replied Mr. Carter. “She allowed strangers, and our guests, to go there unattended.”

“It was a case of divided duty, I think:” urged Miss Crayston. “The dangers of the cliff are really as great as those of the shore. She could not let her young brothers go alone.”

“Excuse me, Miss Crayston, but I do think three ladies ought to have been a match for two boys of seven and eight.”

“So they would have been, Mr. Carter, I assure you, but Lily did not tell us of her difficulty. She wished to please the boys, and not, as she said, to have a scene with them; and she expected to have been less than two hours away instead of more than four.”

“It will be a lesson to us all, Miss Crayston:” interposed Mrs. Carter; “but I am truly sorry that it has been learnt at your cost.”

“Well, well,” said the father, “the bread and water of affliction is what they deserve; but come along, or we shan’t be home in time for supper.”

The two delinquents, Andrew and Willie, stood at a little distance watching their father.

"You may come:" he called to them; "and I should like you to keep an eye on Mr. Tredwen and Mr. Philip; you will see how gentlemen behave when they attend ladies on an expedition."

"My husband is sorely distressed:" said Mrs. Carter. "He can think and speak of nothing else. Mr. Philip says that it is impossible to exaggerate the danger of your position."

Miss Crayston shuddered.

"Do not speak of it:" she said. "Who is Mr. Tredwen?"

"He is Tredwen of Upton," replied Mrs. Carter.

"Upton Manor, near St. Mary's?" asked the Lady Resident.

"Yes."

"But no one lives there."

"Not at present. It has been standing empty for many years. Mr. Tredwen took a house at Trebarwith for twelve months whilst it was repaired; he has been living near us. I think he goes to Upton next month."

"He has a family, has he not?" asked the Lady Resident.

"Four of the wickedest children in Cornwall,"

replied Mrs. Carter; "and who their mother was nobody knows. Mr. Tredwen says he has adopted them, and that they are not his own, but of course nobody believes it."

"He will be our nearest neighbour:" said Miss Crayston.

"I thought Dedman's wood lay between Upton and Minster?"

"No; there is only a cliff called the Bower that separates them. The wood is on the further side of the keeve beyond Upton."

"I hope there is a sufficient space to keep off the children:" said Mrs. Carter. "They are imps of mischief."

"Poor little things!" exclaimed the Lady Resident.

"Perhaps you think I am hard upon them; just wait till you know them. When Mr. Tredwen first arrived I used to ask them here to spend the day; by way of amusement they would stone to death the chickens and ducks, catch the young birds and give them to the cat, drag down the netting from the wall-fruit, tear it to pieces, and set fire to it. One day I heard a great noise, and found they had taken Harold, who is two years old, and Polly, who is four, to the brook; they had got Harold's head under water

and were holding him down. Polly's screams led me to the meadow or the child would have been drowned. After that I told Mr. Tredwen I could not have them again. Poor man ! He is supposed to be looking out for a wife ; and I am sure he must want some one to take charge of those children."

Miss Crayston rose and said somewhat anxiously,

" I think I ought to have accompanied Bertie."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE MOONLIGHT.

ONE lovely evening at the end of July Mrs. Brownlow entered her husband's study :

"Bertie and Miss Crayston have come to say good-bye ; they leave to-morrow morning : " she said. " I have persuaded them to stay this evening ; so please, Jack, put away those papers, and come out into the garden and talk to them."

Mr. Brownlow turned over some pages of a manuscript with which he was occupied, and replied :

"I'll do my very best, my dear ; but I cannot possibly get away for half-an-hour. Is Nicholl in the garden ?"

"No ; Mary says he is very busy, and she doesn't like to interrupt him. I thought I might as well kill two birds with one stone, so I said I would interrupt you both."

"It certainly is an economy of labour and of force. Ask Nicholl to look in on his way to the garden, and we will join you together. Are the ladies alone?"

"You are but an unobservant male creature, Jack, after all. Don't you know that wherever those damsels go two or three men are sure to put in an appearance in the course of twenty minutes?"

"No, my dear," replied Mr. Brownlow. "I did not know anything of the kind."

"Then allow me to call your attention to the fact. But don't sit and meditate upon it now. Get on as fast as you can with your work, there's a good boy. I have come in just to have one look at the blessed babe, and to see that Mary's children are in bed. I shall have supper under the trees for you. Mary says her husband couldn't eat any dinner, and I'm sure you didn't."

"The weather is too hot for eating."

"It won't be hot presently, and it's full moon to-night. I have promised that we will walk home with the two if they stay with us."

"Is your cousin in the garden?"

"Yes; she is telling Miss Crayston about the last meeting of the committee. Walmsley is there, poor fellow."

“Why ‘poor fellow’?”

“Because I don’t believe a truly superior creature would ever marry a man with red hair, and such red!”

“I don’t believe Walmsley is a marrying man.”

“That’s not the difficulty, John. We want to find a marrying woman.”

“Surely that can’t be impossible.”

“Oh, yes, it is. Because you see any woman wouldn’t do. Now, the Lady Resident is just the wife for the Professor; but perhaps he’ll never dream of asking her to marry, and even if he did she would say no.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. I fancy she’s got a history, Jack; and perhaps there’s a lover somewhere in India, or something of that kind. And then there is Fynes always in the way with his endless arguments. He says that Positivists never proselytise, and that it is a distinguishing characteristic of the new religion to appeal to reason only. But, upon my word, by the time he has talked half-an-hour I don’t feel as if I had got any reason left. I can’t think how Miss Crayston gets on with him.”

“Is he also in the garden?”

"No, thank goodness; they never come together. They hate each other."

"What, Fynes and Walmsley? Why, they are nearly always together!"

"I mean Fynes and Mr. Philip."

"Is le Mesurier here?"

"No; but he's been seen on the cliff, and he's sure to come. I can't quite understand Mr. Philip. He has been in Minster for two months, and has certainly seen them both at least once every day; but I can't find out which he prefers."

"You inveterate little match-maker. We all see each other every day. There is nothing new in that."

"But there's something very new in this. Our friend Barbara is nearly out of her senses."

"Do you mean Miss le Mesurier?"

"Yes. Lady Mary patched up a peace; but depend upon it, if it had not been for her presence in Minster friend Barbara would have taken very severe measures with the Lady Resident."

"Come, come, my dear; you are going a little too far."

"Do you feel, Jack, as if you could go on with your work?"

"Not at all."

"I thought it would be best to rouse you

thoroughly when I was about it; so please go into the garden whilst I attend to my domestic duties. By the way, I forgot to tell you that Mr. Tredwen called this afternoon; that is the second time this week he has been in Minster."

"And pray, shall I find him also in the garden?"

"I have no doubt you will when he comes to Upton if you give him the slightest encouragement. He says the manor-house is nearly ready, and he expects to bring the children in two or three weeks' time."

"Nothing will give me more pleasure than to renew my acquaintance with Oliver Tredwen," said Mr. Brownlow, gravely. "When they were at Oxford I knew his brother, who is now dead, very intimately, and have an affectionate remembrance of him."

"John," said Mrs. Brownlow, going up to her husband and looking him in the face, "Mrs. Armstrong says there are ugly stories about Mr. Tredwen and those children. She asserts that Miss Kimberley Finch once, in some extraordinary way, was in the same house with them, nursed them through some illness, I believe, and she states positively that their mother is alive, and that she is not Mr. Tredwen's wife."

"I should think the source from whence that

tale is derived is enough to discredit it : ” replied Mr. Brownlow with some warmth. “ Depend upon it, it is entirely a fabrication. Don’t listen to gossip, my dear.”

“ Very well, John ; I won’t : ” said Mrs. Brownlow, as she left the room.

Through the open door and the window beyond it, the Professor could see figures moving in the garden, and hear the sound of voices. He looked for a moment with some hesitation at the examination papers that covered his table, and then he hastily collected them, thrust them into a drawer, and joined the ladies in the garden.

As he did so he saw the portly figure of Mr. Philip emerge from the wilderness.

Mr. Philip held a small tuft of wild flowers in his hand ; and when his greetings were ended he turned to Bertie, saying :

“ I have brought some euphrasia, Miss Ravenshaw. It is a plant you ought to know.”

“ I do know it quite well : ” exclaimed Bertie. “ It is eye-bright, and I am very fond of it. I have a little brother who always calls it bright-eyes. I did not know it as euphrasia ; but if you had told me the other day that you were speaking of eye-bright I should have understood your meaning better. There are lovely tufts of it

growing in the wilderness ; do come and look at them. I took the children with their little barrows to dig some up a month ago, and we are all proud of our success in transplanting."

Mr. Philip followed Bertie, talking as he went of the spiritual affinities of euphrasia.

Mr. Brownlow turned to Miss Crayston, and asked what she thought of the French examiner.

"I think he has done very well:" she replied ; "but Mr. Walmsley can tell you better than I can."

"Are the ladies satisfied with him?" asked Mr. Brownlow.

"They ought to be. He is their own choice."

"I met the managers at St. Mary's looking anxious," said Mrs. Nicholl, "after an interview with this unhappy French gentleman. Miss le Mesurier took me on one side, and confided to me that they were in a very awkward predicament, as there were two years of his life of which he had not given at all a satisfactory account."

"What had they been doing with him?"

"Well, they seemed to think they could not take such an important step as to decide on his appointment as French examiner without a full knowledge of his antecedents. The council had left the matter in their hands, and they were

determined to show that they appreciated their responsibilities. Mrs. Armstrong said he had answered fully and most satisfactorily at first, but that when it came to the two years he had spent in Germany they could get nothing out of him."

"Walmsley, we live in an age of progress!"

"We do indeed, Brownlow."

"Well, Mrs. Nicholl, how did it end?"

"I believe they have asked him to meet them again to-morrow. Mrs. Armstrong said they *must* know more about those two years."

"Mr. Fynes told me," said Miss Crayston, "that he saw M. Laserre at the railway station with a carpet-bag, and heard that he was leaving by the night train."

"Delightful episode:" exclaimed Mr. Brownlow. "At the same time, Walmsley, I must say it seems to me a mistake to make any appointments outside the college, or to vest the decision with regard to them in any hands except those of the committee and the council."

"Well, you see this case is exceptional:" said Mr. Walmsley. "There is no professor of modern languages at Minster. Poor old Dupont is past his work as a teacher, and these ladies offered to defray all expenses not covered by the fees of the

class if they might appoint an examiner and teacher. Of course the arrangement is exceptional, I might also say tentative. They engaged Laserre, a man of some note, to hold examinations and deliver three lectures on three consecutive days."

"I was present to-day:" said Mrs. Nicholl. "It was an open lecture. I could not leave my little Mary at home, so I took her with me. She was very much impressed, and has been practising all the evening."

"Practising what?" asked Mr. Walmsley, "her French verbs?"

"Not at all. Trying to hold her handkerchief at arm's length before her face, and spit into it 'like the French gentleman.'"

Mrs. Brownlow emerged from the house, carrying her baby. She had found him awake, hot, and restless; so she threw a white shawl round him and took him in her arms. When she joined her husband and friends the sun had already set, and the moon was high up in the sky. There was too much light for the stars to be visible, unless one looked steadily into the deep blue overhead, and then they might be seen twinkling here and there. The bright colours were fading from the grass and trees and flowers; brown

and gray took the place of the vivid green, the scarlet, blue, and yellow, that made the garden so gay in the daylight; the monotone of sleep fell on the wilderness and the cliff beyond; and the silence of night seemed to steal onward towards the group of friends under the trees.

The ladies drew together and talked in whispers about the baby, who lay with wide-open eyes upon his mother's knees. Bertie's white dress gleamed through the bushes. She was walking with Mr. Philip; his ponderous sentences fell upon her ears with the roll and the swell and the heavy crash of the great Atlantic waves down upon the shore. She listened and replied in monosyllables; but she listened to the sound rather than the sense of his words, and was busy with the pictures they suggested to her, and not with the views he was trying to explain.

Mr. Philip knew the Donaldsons, who lived a few miles from Norlands. He had said that he would call when Bertie was at home for the holidays. She could easily bring about that meeting with Trissy. Poor Trissy, whose life had been all in the twilight. How good she was, and how happy she would be with a home of her own. Mr. Philip was already interested in her. He was always willing to hear Bertie speak of this

dear friend, and had expressed a warm desire to make her acquaintance. From Trissy her thoughts turned to those at home. They would be thinking of her on that night as she of them. She had been away for nearly seven months. It would be too delightful to see them all again, to hear the children at their play, to find her father in that dear familiar corner, to visit the cows with Molly, and go with her to see the foals and colts; they would stretch out their long necks and sniff timidly. She could feel the soft tremulous lips which seem to flutter about one's hand and dress. Molly would certainly make her rise before six on the first morning, so that she might see all the favourites before breakfast. More than half of the year her father had promised was at an end. Would he exact her return to Norlands at the end of it! Would her mother! She felt a momentary uneasiness, and then the sweet peace and beauty of the night reassured her. Everything was good and beautiful, and "God is in Heaven," she thought, looking up. This was the form of words which embodied her faith and hope. God near her and above her, as surely present as the heavens above; not upon the noisy, busy earth, but in the pure serene altitudes, judging all things

wisely, deciding all things for the best. "God is in Heaven," she thought, as she drew a deep breath, half of relief, half pleasure.

Mr. Philip also was very happy as he paced up and down the lovers' walk with Bertie. The heavens and the earth, the night, the stars, and the beautiful maiden by his side, were an image and an allegory. He translated them into words of deep and mystical meaning, and the words were symbols of the great underlying spiritual facts that are the foundation of all things. Bertie's monosyllables, the rapt expression of her face as she looked up each time that they turned and the moonlight fell upon her, the gentle measured pace, and the soft hush of her garments as they swept the grass, all these things helped to make him eloquent. Thought, and words meet for the expression of thought, never failed him; but on this night he was conscious that he had reached a higher level than his wont, thanks to the sweet companion by his side.

His deep incessant voice fell like the murmur of waves upon the ears of the friends, sitting silent under the trees, and was broken only by the sharp chirp of the cricket, or the distant barking of a dog.

Mr. Nicholl had joined the group, and after a

few words of greeting they had all lapsed into silence. The ladies no longer talked of the boy. Their thoughts were with the events of the day; that final meeting of the ladies' committee, the ill-concealed disappointment of the managers, the hard-won triumph of Lady Mary, who had surprised them all by her appearance at the meeting.

If it had not been for Lady Mary's unexpected presence this would have been the last evening Miss Crayston would have passed with them. A long letter from Miss Kimberley Finch, the summing-up of many minute grievances into one gigantic wrong, and the vehement and bitter denunciations of Miss le Mesurier with regard to the course taken by Miss Crayston and Bertie at the time of Nora Stewart's death, had caused Mrs. Milner to waver, and convinced Miss Graham and another lady that they must leave the decision as to the Lady Resident's return in October in the hands of the managers. Every one thought this matter had been decided two months previously, when Lady Mary first came back to Minster. The pertinacity of the managers in returning to the charge, the resolution they had expressed not to submit to an adverse decision on any point which they held to

be important, might well alarm Miss Crayston's friends as to the security of her position at St. Mary's. As the moonlight fell upon the Lady Resident's clear, pale face Mrs. Brownlow recalled her first rapture at the sight of beauty, with which she was now familiar. Miss Crayston had declined to take part in theatrical performances; she had not been prominent in any entertainment; she never played or sang in public, though she did both well, and she talked little. And yet the Lady Resident was an acknowledged power in Minster. When she looked up at a Professor and asked him to do a thing for her, he did it; when she saw that any change was necessary in a class, or the arrangement of it, every one agreed with her; when she entered a room the occupants were conscious of a gentle, gracious influence, strong, and yet sweet, with the strength that came from a true, noble, unselfish nature. Mrs. Brownlow asked herself what Minster would be without the lovely lady, as she called her, and looking at her cousin, Mrs. Nicholl, she saw the same trouble shining through her eyes.

Mr. Nicholl, Mr. Brownlow, and Mr. Walmsley had also become silent. A few angry words from Mr. Nicholl, who was hot-tempered and

free of speech, had been hushed by his companions. All three were now thinking of St. Mary's college, of the troubled and troublous meetings of the council; of the endless talk of inspection, examination, visitors to the classes, poverty, funds, debt, the power of the managers, and their resolution to push it to the uttermost. The professors were not unanimous. Fynes was not reliable. It had become necessary to count votes, and ascertain who would attend, before measures of importance were brought forward. The work that had been ushered in with flowery words and willing deeds was beginning to grow distasteful, and there was one name seldom absent from the lips of the managers, a name potent in gloomy suggestions, and able to darken every brow. It was the name of Miss Kimberley Finch.

The professors knew that they had now escaped from Miss Kimberley Finch for a time. The long vacation was before them. By a supreme effort, and thanks to Lady Mary, they also at the council meeting had been triumphant. But their success was, as they acknowledged, virtually a defeat. They had been saved from subjection to the managers by a single vote.

Miss Kimberley Finch was alert and nimble.

In the autumn she would be prepared for them. Such a respite was too short. But Professor Walmsley had no thoughts for the meeting, or for Miss Kimberley Finch. He sat with his eyes fixed on the Lady Resident. "Will she say yes?" he pondered, "or will she say no?"

As they mused, lights gleamed from the houses near them, maids were busy carrying out a table, chairs, a lamp, and arranging them on the open lawn. There was a clatter of plates and glasses, and the sound of corks being drawn.

"Come," said Mrs. Brownlow, "come to supper. I wouldn't have the table under the trees because of grubs and caterpillars; besides, you can go on looking at the moon, all of you. So please begin at once."

"Here comes our sweet girl-graduate in her golden prime!" said Mr. Nicholl, as Bertie advanced towards them.

They gathered round her, and as they all moved towards the table, dark forebodings and angry thoughts vanished. Bright, witty, and merry was the talk on all sides; and when, after supper was over, and their ramble by the cliff ended, farewells were said at the door of St. Mary's, all apprehensions had vanished.

“Next session we shall meet again:” they said. And Professor Walmsley turned away and sighed, and wondered as he walked home if she would have said yes or no.

CHAPTER XXII.

AT HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

MR. RAVENSHAW sat in the dining-room at Norlands, in his favourite chimney-corner. The August day was bright and warm, the oriel window near him was wide open; but he never liked to be without a fire, and logs of wood were smouldering on the open hearth. He watched his children at play in the garden, whilst Mrs. Ravenshaw and Miss Crayston talked.

A hammock was slung between two oak trees, on the further side of a broad lawn, and Bertie was lying in it stretched at full length. All the younger children had clustered round her, and were putting their respective pets into the hammock, as they swung it gently backwards and forwards.

Bertie had a rabbit, some guinea pigs, two tortoises, and a white mouse, and was warmly protesting against the addition of Jack the hedge-

hog. The ribbon that tied back her hair had fallen off, and her hair was loose on her shoulders. The hedgehog, she said, would be sure to roll in it.

"Bertie," said Ethel, "I will take care of your hair if you'll only have Jack. He will be so disappointed if he's not in the fun."

"Now, Ethel, it's me to take care of Bertie's hair. You know I always used to."

"Maggie, don't say *it's me*," interposed Bertie, "it isn't right. You must say, It is I."

"Oh, Bertie, we never used to in play time, and you never told us so before!" protested all the children.

"Well, but you are all getting quite old now. Why Frank was ten yesterday, and I am much wiser, so we must try to improve!"

"There'll be no use in trying to improve that way," said Maggie, "for I like *it's me* much better, don't you, Frank?"

"Yes," replied Frank; "and if anybody says *it's I* I shan't know what they mean. I'd change to please *you*, Bertie," he added; "but of course it's no use to say things people don't understand."

Lenny doubled his small fist, and gave Frank a punch by way of remonstrance:

"I shall say whatever Bertie tells me:" he exclaimed.

"I give in for the present:" said Bertie, "but we'll have it out at the next Latin lesson."

"No, no:" cried Maggie. "It's English, it isn't Latin, and I don't want any more of that horrid old Latin. It all comes of your going to college, Bertie, for we girls never had Latin before. Mr. Burns says it's not the least use to try and teach girls; they never learn their declensions because they are not flogged. It's nothing but flogging that makes little boys learn Latin verbs and declensions."

Said Bertie in order to change the subject: "Whose is this dear little black rabbit?"

"It's I's," promptly replied Lenny.

There was a merry shout from the children, and Frank jumped in at one side of the hammock and rolled out at the other, in an ecstasy of pleasure.

Lenny, with a bright red face, looked appealingly to Bertie.

"You should have said *it's mine*," she responded gently to the little boy, stretching out a hand which he took hold of.

"There!" exclaimed Frank, "I knew she couldn't hold out. She's come round to our side. *It's me, it's mine*. Of course that's right."

"It's me, it's mine:" shouted the children, dancing round the hammock; and then a shrill little voice piped out, "*It's I.*"

"It's I and I's:" they began with a laugh.

"Its eyes, nose, and mouth:" screamed Maggie; and they all took up the cry as they danced. Bertie laughed and stretched her hands out to catch them as they flitted past her. An impulsive Skye terrier, who had been kept away from the hammock for the sake of peace and harmony, barked at the heels of the children as they ran. He saw his opportunity, sprang into the hammock, stretched himself by Bertie's side, and began to lick her face.

She jumped up, scattering the favourites, and exclaiming:

"Oh, Jip, I can't have it:" ran across the lawn.

"The children are very happy together:" said Mr. Ravenshaw, who was watching them.

"Bertie has grown:" added Mrs. Ravenshaw, whose eyes followed this one child in all her movements. "She is quite as tall as Gladys, and I am so glad to find she hasn't learnt to stoop."

"Why should she learn to stoop?" asked the father.

“Girls very often do at her age:” said Mrs. Ravenshaw; “but Bertie has certainly not fallen off since she left home. You say she is always well, Miss Crayston?”

“Yes:” replied the Lady Resident; “she has perfect health, a very fine constitution I should say. She enters as thoroughly and heartily into her work as her pleasure; indeed whatever she does is pleasure. I never knew a girl who really enjoyed life as she does, life in all its aspects.”

“My children all have constitutions without a flaw, so the doctors tell me:” said Mrs. Ravenshaw.

“My wife is particularly proud of the children’s health. She has quite a peculiar and personal satisfaction in it.”

“I am sure,” said Miss Crayston, “that Mrs. Ravenshaw may well be proud of such a family. We all think very much of Bertie in Minster, but she is not at all above the home average. I never saw so many beautiful children. I really can do nothing else but watch them.”

“The beauty of young people depends on their health:” Mrs. Ravenshaw asserted in an authoritative manner. “If parents made that the chief object of their consideration all children would be beautiful.”

“Don’t you think many parents do make health the chief consideration?”

“Not in the right way. They are always telling children to do this, and not to do that; to eat this, and not to eat that. Such an education is the ruin of children, body and mind. They ought to grow up like flowers in a well-ordered garden; all the responsibility should rest on the gardeners. Children are not equally clever, but they ought all to be healthy, and it is the fault of parents if they are not.”

“You have got Mrs. Ravenshaw on her hobby:” said the husband; “but, my dear, who is that at the garden gate? Isn’t it Trissy?”

“So it is:” exclaimed the lady of the house. A few moments later a small, very precise-looking person of about five-and-thirty was in her arms, kissing her and crying.

Miss Trescott wiped her eyes as she turned to shake hands with Mr. Ravenshaw:

“I really did try not to come till my holidays were over:” she said, in an apologetic manner; “but when I thought of Bertie at home again it was of no use, so I left Westhampton by the six o’clock train, and have come just for a week. Now *do* you think I am very foolish?”

Mr. Ravenshaw did not reply to the question,

but taking Miss Trescott's hand he turned to Miss Crayston, saying: "This, Miss Crayston, is Ada Trescott, the eldest daughter of my very old friend, Colonel Trescott, who died fifteen years ago. She was good enough to come to us then to take charge of the children, and her peculiarity is that she can never go away; or perhaps I ought to say, that she can never stay away from us."

"I know you so well from Bertie," said Miss Crayston, "that I feel as if we were old friends."

"I owe my name to Bertie," said Miss Trescott. "We thought the children ought not to continue to call me Ada, as I was to be their governess, so they began calling me Miss Trescott. Bertie was only three years old at the time, and found the title quite unmanageable. She struck out Trissy for herself. Everyone else adopted it, and now I have no other name."

"I am delighted that you have come to-day:" exclaimed Mrs. Ravenshaw. "We are going to have a picnic in honour of Miss Crayston and Bertie, and we should have been lost without you. Will you go to Bertie on the lawn whilst I make the arrangements; and, my dear," turning to Mr. Ravenshaw, "will you tell Miss Crayston

about the visit we received last week from that very peculiar person. What was her name?"

"Miss Kimberley Finch. Do you know her?" he asked of Miss Crayston, as his wife and Miss Trescott left the room.

"By name only."

"She spoke as if she was familiar with everybody and everything at Minster."

"She corresponds with ladies who live there."

"Really! Is that all?"

Mr. Ravenshaw was silent for a few minutes. Then he said :

"Perhaps my wife is right. You may have been surprised that we asked you to change the date of your visit from the end to the beginning of the holidays, and we owe you an explanation. I must assure you, first of all, that neither my wife nor I attach the slightest importance to anything that lady said. We are not in the habit of distrusting our children, or those to whom we have confided them."

Miss Crayston fixed very earnest eyes on Mr. Ravenshaw. There was a shadow of surprise and even of trouble in them, which he noticed, and said with a smile :

"Miss Kimberley Finch came to desire us to remove Bertie from your charge, and to place

her with Miss Flint in the boarding-house that adjoins St. Mary's College."

There was something in the manner in which he said this that made Miss Crayston laugh; and Mr. Ravenshaw laughed too, and proceeded to give an account of the visit.

It appeared that about noon of a day some weeks before, a cab from the railway station, three miles off, drove up to the door. There was a lady in the cab, who wore a small, dark flat bonnet. Ethel, who saw her arrive, was sure she had taken off this bonnet during her journey and sat on it. Gladys thought it would not have been in any way affected by such a proceeding. She had on a grey woollen shawl pinned high around her throat, and a dress of some brown and black mixture. There was rather a battered and disreputable look about her, which was increased by a certain redness of nose, general blotchiness of complexion, and a fishy dimness of eye which even spectacles could not brighten. She explained that she was on a visit to the Johnstones, friends of the Ravenshaws, living at Easthall, a town some twenty miles away, and that at their suggestion she had come to tell them about their daughter at St. Mary's. She did not add that the Johnstones had said any one could

stay at the Ravenshaw's by merely taking a portmanteau and driving there in a cab. But she had brought the portmanteau, and told the cabman not to wait.

Now it was one of Mrs. Ravenshaw's peculiarities to dislike any one with a bad complexion.

She received Miss Kimberley Finch, therefore, with some distrust, and taking the card that lady had sent in, she left her sitting at the window in the dining-room, and advanced to her husband in his corner.

"Drink:" she murmured, as she showed him the card.

"Bad digestion:" he made reply, in a low tone.

He advanced to their visitor, and as they talked together Mrs. Ravenshaw scanned Miss Kimberley Finch with growing dissatisfaction. She did not like a woman to be untidy, to give the general effect of slovenliness, if not of dirt. She was sure that her worst apprehensions would be realised. Bertie would forget to wash her hair, and that very fine soft hair wants a great deal of care. It looks like floss silk when it is attended to, but it needs attention. Then the collar and cuffs. "Dear, dear!" she thought, "how can a woman be so untidy!"

She was roused from her scrutiny by noticing

that her husband was making short incisive remarks. What were they talking about? Boys fighting, and some one who watched them and gave them money. Then it was of a figure dressed up to make fun of some authorities; and somebody else who was punished whilst Miss Ravenshaw went free. *Who* was it that was dead? and what had Bertie to do with crosses and white flowers? What Miss Ravenshaw could it be? and who was it that stayed alone in a class-room with the professors?

Mr. Ravenshaw rose.

"I wish you good morning, ma'am:" he said; "I am going out." And he left the room.

Mrs. Ravenshaw, with hot, angry colour mounting to her brows, was left with a woman who at once assumed a tone of superiority, and spoke as if she was going off to Minster to remove Bertie from Miss Crayston's care. The mother did not trouble herself to ask any questions as to the tales that had been repeated. She was too angry for that, and she was conscious that in anger she was apt to be intemperate. She would say nothing that this bitter-tongued woman could use against her and her child; but if she would only go!

Miss Kimberley Finch began to see that the

lady before her ought to be mollified, so she changed her tone. She had heard of Mrs. Ravenshaw's large family; had no doubt there were other daughters who might be placed under the charge of Miss Flint, and would like to see them.

"My children are never interrupted in their work:" said Mrs. Ravenshaw, coldly.

Miss Kimberley Finch said she was in no hurry, she could wait. She had been thinking of the elder daughters. Mrs. Ravenshaw divined her intentions, and asked by what train she proposed to return to Easthall. Miss Kimberley Finch did not know.

Mrs. Ravenshaw left the room, and as she passed the hall door saw the cabman leisurely driving away. It was the work of a moment to have him recalled and sent to her.

"The lady," he said, in reply to her question, if he was going away, "had told him not to wait."

"How soon is there a train for Easthall?" asked Mrs. Ravenshaw.

"There'll be time enough," replied the driver, "if she leaves here in twenty minutes."

"Then you will wait. Take up that port-manteau. She is going back with you."

"There are twenty minutes to spare," said Mrs. Ravenshaw, returning to the dining-room, "and I have ordered some sherry and sandwiches, which I hope you will take. I must ask you to excuse me, as this is a very busy morning."

And so saying she also left the room, and left an angry woman, who called her a "vulgar upstart," when she returned to Eastham, and wrote twenty pages of virulent advice to the managers of St. Mary's.

The Ravenshaws did not know this. Indeed, they had quite failed to discover that their visitor was a superior person. "No doubt," they thought, "this Miss Flint who keeps the boarding-house is related to her, and she wants to get boarders for her." Nevertheless, they resolved to see Miss Crayston as soon as possible. The sight of her had reassured them, and still more delightful had been the sight of Bertie. The father sat and watched his child all the first evening; with her lovely eyes and hair, her slender, graceful form and low, clear voice, she was all that he best loved to see.

"She will run Gladys very close in good looks:" said he to his wife.

"She certainly is improved in appearance, but most of all in manner."

“I think we might send Molly to Minster in the autumn :” said the father.

“Molly has no head for study. She reads nothing but novels.”

“I should say,” replied Mr. Ravenshaw, “that a woman has a very good head for study if she can read the modern treatises on love-making, which are in as many volumes as the Decline and Fall.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DECLARATION.

“SUCH a *fat* letter for Bertie:” said Lenny, who was walking round the breakfast table to dispense letters that had come in by the early post.

“Let me see!” exclaimed Maggie, who accompanied him. “Oh, Bertie, the writing is like the skeleton men that Ethel draws, with long, long legs and arms, and no bodies.”

“Look, papa, isn’t it *funny*! and Bertie is spelt with a *y* that goes right down to the bottom of the page, and stops there with a club foot.”

“Bring my letter to me, Lenny:” said Bertie, “it is from Mr. Philip;” and she turned with a bright look to her father. “I am sure it is to say that he is coming, and I do hope he will come soon.”

Bertie had been at home a week, and during that time had told her father so much about Mr. Philip that he had his own suspicions with regard to that gentleman's views. She had also hinted at her plan with regard to Trissy, at which the father had laughed.

"There's a great, large seal, Bertie ; and please, will you give it to me : " said Lenny, who still kept the letter in his hand ; "and may I fetch a pair of scissors, and then you can cut it out without breaking it."

"I will tear it very carefully, darling, and you shall have the seal ; but bring the letter to me at once, for I want to see if Mr. Philip is coming before Trissy goes back to Westhampton. I do so want you to see him, dear Trissy."

The lady addressed said she should like to see Mr. Philip, as every one at Norlands, following the example of every one at Minster, called Philip le Mesurier, but she doubted whether she should understand him. He seemed to talk on such very difficult subjects.

Bertie smiled upon her, and paused in the opening of her letter :

"Yes, I am quite sure you will understand him. I have always thought so."

She withdrew several sheets from the envelope ;

they were covered closely with characters that looked like hieroglyphics.

“ Four sheets ; sixteen pages ! ” exclaimed Maggie, who was standing at Bertie’s right hand, whilst Lenny was at her left. “ My dear Miss Bertie,” said Maggie. “ And there’s that *y* again ! ”

“ Come to your seats, Lenny and Maggie ; or if you have finished breakfast you may go into the garden : ” said Mrs. Ravenshaw.

The children retreated quietly and stood in front of their chairs at the table, watching their sister.

Bertie began to read with eager pleasure ; but as she turned the first page her colour deepened, and she looked across the table at her father with trouble in her eyes. He divined the cause, but saw no remedy, and therefore took up his coffee-cup and appeared to drink.

The mother, observant from the first, came to the rescue. She gathered together several newspapers and letters which she had opened, and holding them out, said : “ Bertie, take these papers to your father’s seat in the garden.”

“ Mayn’t I ? ” asked Maggie.

“ You will stay where you are : ” replied the mother.

Lenny drew down his upper lip as he watched Bertie, and doubled his little fist. When she rose and left the room he struck the table and exclaimed : " Naughty man ! "

" Don't be so foolish, Lenny. There's nothing to cry about : " said Maggie. " He isn't a naughty man. It's Mr. Philip ! "

All the young children were puzzled. Something had happened to Bertie. The grown-up ones evidently knew what it was ; but what could it be ! It couldn't be anybody dead, for there was no black on the letter. No one moved from the table, and Bertie had been sent away.

After what seemed a very long time Mrs. Ravenshaw said to her husband :

" Are you going into the garden ? "

" Yes ; I think I will. "

He coughed and cleared his throat in a somewhat unnecessarily loud manner.

" If the child does not want to see me just yet she can run away : " he thought.

But Bertie, in her white gown with blue ribbons, was sitting under the tree, and the open letter was in her hand.

" I am so glad you have come, father dear. I want to show you this letter : " she said, holding it out.

Mr. Ravenshaw took it, and noticed as he did so that his daughter was pale, and there was a troubled look in her eyes.

He sat down and began to read. Bertie watched him closely. He read on and on in silence, and remained silent when it was finished.

“ Well, father ! ”

“ Well, child ! ”

“ Do tell me what you think, father dear.”

“ I think, my love, that I shall be very much obliged if you will fetch me a book from the library.”

Bertie looked extremely disappointed, but she said as cheerfully as she could :

“ Of course I will.”

“ You will find it,” resumed her father, “ to the right of the door, on the fifth shelf. No ; it is quite at the top, third or fourth from the corner, a small shabby book, entitled, *The Writings of Jacob Böhme*.”

“ Now, father, dear, do you really want it ? ”

“ I think, my love, I must read two or three chapters to enable me to find out what this man means. And whilst you are about it, you may as well bring the *Beauties of Swedenborg* from the same shelf.”

“ I shan’t do anything of the kind : ” she laughed,

kneeling at her father's side. "And you do know very well," and her head drooped, "that he has asked me to marry him."

"Then you really must stand a little way off, or walk up and down the lawn. I have got to correct all my notions about you and other things also, and I can't do it whilst you are here."

"But, father dear, I don't want you to correct any of the old notions. This is all a mistake. I shall soon make it right with Mr. Philip. You see it is not like an ordinary, foolish, love-letter."

"Not at all:" replied the father.

"And—and—I think it's a very great honour to receive such a letter; and if I wished ever to marry I would rather marry Mr. Philip than anybody I know. But you see I don't intend to marry."

"May I ask why?"

"Well, father dear, you know there are too many women in the world. You have often said so. They can't all marry; and I think those who have got occupations and interests *ought* to remain single, and let the others marry. If unmarried women were only sensible there are hundreds of ways in which they might be quite

as useful and quite as happy as if they were married."

"I quite agree with you:" said the father, much relieved to find that there was no immediate prospect of such an embarrassing addition as Mr. Philip to his family circle.

"The only thing," said Bertie, after a pause, "at least one thing, is, that I am not sure when a man like Mr. Philip wants to marry a woman whether she ought to say no."

"I have no hesitation on that point:" replied the father, "and I will never give my consent to the marriage of any daughter of mine unless affection and esteem go hand-in-hand together. One is as essential as the other."

"But, father, I don't want to marry Mr. Philip. I would ever so much rather not marry him. I am afraid you don't understand me. You see I like him so very much, and I am so sorry that he should ask anything that I have to refuse; and so it seems as if perhaps it could not be right to refuse."

"I don't follow your reasoning, but I am sure it *is* right to refuse. Here comes your mother. You can run away if you like."

"Oh, thank you, dear father. Here is the letter."

Bertie passed her mother with a bright blush, and Mrs. Ravenshaw, advancing, received the letter and sat down to peruse it. She read two or three pages, and then looking up, said :

“I never was more mistaken in my whole life. I thought it was a proposal. I can’t read all this rigmarole, and I don’t understand anything except that the man is coming this morning ; but what is he coming for ?”

Mr. Ravenshaw did not give an exact reply. He said : “There is a draught somewhere, and I always feel it in this part of the garden ; if you will come in-doors to my chimney-corner we will talk the matter over.”

An hour later Mrs. Ravenshaw said with a sigh of relief : “Well, that is all settled. He shall see Bertie first, as soon as he arrives. Of course he may be a very good man and a rich man, as Miss Crayston tells me ; but he is fifteen years older than Bertie, and his mind is a myth. I have only one request to make, Mr. Ravenshaw, and it is, that you don’t leave the talking to me when Mr. le Mesurier comes.”

“My dear, I very seldom do leave it to you ; you generally take it.”

Mrs. Ravenshaw did not answer. She referred to Mr. Philip’s letter which she still held.

“What do you think he means by ‘the high forum of inter-communication’?” she asked

“The heart,” was the reply.

“Oh. And what is this about the right-ventricle being played upon by friendly emotions, and the left auricle introducing the similitude of love proper to the blood?”

“It all means the same thing; the heart.”

“I am glad at any rate that he does recognise the existence of the heart:” said Mrs. Ravenshaw.

“He does nothing else but reiterate it in one form or another; and, you see, he says when he comes this morning he intends to trace the principle of the heart in other spheres.”

“Poor Bertie:” exclaimed the mother; “she shall have a glass of milk and some seed-cake at eleven.”

Being thus fortified Bertie received her lover at high noon. She asked to see him in the garden. The sky was white with heat, and the sunlight had driven the shadow of the trees back from all parts of the lawn. As Mr. Philip crossed the grass he took off his hat and wiped his head and face with a large white handkerchief; then he advanced to Bertie, and took her hand in his large grasp.

"Where the hand closes," he said, "it has a desire to possess, and the grasp is proportioned to the object."

Bertie smiled. She remembered thinking that Mr. Philip took a hand as if he intended to put it in his pocket. This very frank smile somewhat troubled Mr. Philip. It was the smile of the girl he had left in the garden at Minster, and not quite what he had expected after his letter.

"Have you had my letter?" he asked.

"Yes:" replied Bertie, and this time she blushed.

With the feminine instinct to postpone a difficulty she added:

"So much that you say about the heart is new to me that I cannot understand it. What do you mean by speaking of it as quadrumanous?"

"It is a symbol, an analogy. The heart, as I have told you, grasps at the blood, clutches at the passing life-stream, about eighty times every minute. The two auricles and two ventricles are store-rooms and pleasure-chambers where, in the house of the heart, the blood is received. The fire of natural affection glows within this house and plays upon its inhabitants. The elders behold their posterity about them, and here, at the very origin of life, we discover the

co-existence of conjugal and parental ties, and enter into those broad and spacious relations of which marriage is the symphony of inauguration."

Bertie winced at the emphasis which Mr. Philip laid upon the word "marriage," and, hoping to postpone the evil hour, she said :

"I suppose the heart always draws us toward earth and the things of earth."

"Old anatomists used to say that the heart is the animal that is in the animal:" replied Mr. Philip gravely, as he took off his spectacles and wiped them. "It has, as I have told you, a great arterial curve which attaches it to the earth; but it has also a pulmonic ring by which it is hooked to the air; and thus it belongs exclusively neither to earth or heaven, but remains central and true to its place. You must remember, however, Miss Bertie, that this which I have so often described to you is the heart of science, a hollow muscle, four rooms, and nobody living in them. Into these empty chambers love must enter; love which is an active, central impulsion; love which connects mankind with human objects. Your lover, Miss Bertie, not only *has* a heart, he *is* a heart towards you."

They stood side by side in the garden. Mr. Philip lifted his hat and once again had recourse

to the large white handkerchief. Bertie clasped her hands and looked down.

She was trying to nerve herself to speak, for she knew that the time had come and could not be deferred; but before she was able to utter a word Mr. Philip resumed in his grave tones, looking away as he spoke towards the distant horizon:

“Love is the heart of the heart; love is spherical, like the heart; love is based upon all that is magnetic and occultly impulsive, like the heart; love has a constancy that belongs to no will, but only to nature, the fatal will of will.”

“Oh, Mr. Philip!” exclaimed Bertie, upon whom the reiteration of the word *love* had the most depressing effect. “Oh, Mr. Philip, I do not love you.”

“No, dear child,” he replied; “and I do not love you. Into the large and empty chambers of the heart we will enter together; we will take possession of them together, you and I, and fill them with those family joys that know nothing of time’s weary limits. Not without grave and anxious thought have I listened to the inner voice, which tells me that the time has come when I must enter into the realm of love and claim my rights. The heart within me beats quick at the apprehension of new bliss, of new life. Man’s

most external world is woman, and this world has been unknown to me and undesired until I saw you. Since then I have found out what I have long suspected, that organisations prepared to receive a heart, material or spiritual, may maintain life for a time with a defective heart, but they never become adult. You and I, Miss Bertie, can only attain our true stature and full development in union."

Bertie looked up at Mr. Philip with a pale and troubled countenance.

He took her hand and said :

"The lover tends to impinge, but the beloved tends to yield."

And then Bertie burst into tears, and said :

"Oh, Mr. Philip. I want you to marry some one else."

Mr. Philip dropped her hand and took a step backwards.

"You want me to marry some one else!" he exclaimed.

There was a long pause, and he watched her as she cried.

"And pray who is it?" he asked at length, coldly.

"It is Trissy," sobbed Bertie, "it is Miss Trescott. She is very good and true, and——"

“And it is all nonsense:” he said; but he wasn’t angry.

Bertie always remembered that he hadn’t been angry; he drew back as if he had received an unexpected blow, but a few minutes afterwards he stood by her side, smiling at her and speaking kindly.

“Don’t cry, Miss Bertie,” he said. “The tears streaming from your eyes are messengers running from a place of fear. Don’t let me see that it is I who frighten you and trouble your sweet life.”

“I am not frightened,” said Bertie; “but oh, Mr. Philip, I am so sorry:” and the tears burst forth afresh.

“Don’t cry, dear child. And yet I cannot blame the plenteous tears, for as they fall a veil of mist is lifted that has hitherto shrouded you. We shall not be lovers, never lovers,” he said; “but you will let me be your friend.”

Bertie held out her hand. He took it in silence, and then taking her left hand also, he pressed them together in both his own.

“Good-bye,” he said, “we close this page; but others of true and beautiful import may open for us.”

Bertie’s trembling lips tried to frame good-bye, but in vain.

"I have hurt you:" he added with regret. "Forgive me. You will forgive, I know; forgiveness pertains to your bounteous youth. And you will remember that although I see you now, and perhaps for the first time, as the woman passionately to be desired, I see you also as the woman humbly to be adored. My most beautiful, very true, tender, and noble lady, farewell. May you be happy with all best, highest, and most potent gifts, and have and hold them for long years of life to come. Farewell."

As he spoke he knelt down and kissed her hands before he released them. Then he turned away and went out into the sunlight of the lawn, and towards an open window.

Mr. and Mrs. Ravenshaw with some of the children were in the drawing-room, and the windows towards the lawn were all open.

"Papa," said Frank, "Bertie said such a good thing last night. Charlie Dawson was here, you know, and he hadn't seen her before. So he asked if her name was Bertha, and I said no, it is Alberta; so I told him mamma wanted her to be a boy and to call her Albert. So he said, your name is not worthy of you, Miss Bertie."

"Papa, ought Frank to say 'so' every time he speaks," asked Maggie.

"You shall write him out a list of conjunctions, my dear."

"Well, Frank?"

"Well, papa, and so Bertie stuck her head up, you know how she does it, and said: 'Then I shall make it worthy, sir!' Now wasn't that a good answer?"

"Very!" came emphatically from a gentleman who had entered at one of the windows. "And when you see Mr. Charles Dawson again, tell him that your sister's name is Albrecht, the Allbright, and it is a very beautiful name, and very characteristic."

The children retreated at the sight of this grave, tall gentleman, and he advanced to Mr. Ravenshaw.

"I will not leave, sir," he said, "without expressing to you and Mrs. Ravenshaw my entire acquiescence in your daughter's decision. I could not hold her in such high esteem as I do if it was possible for me to cherish base regret, or entertain unworthy anger at her loss, although she might have led me to the very crown and highest pinnacle of human bliss."

"I am so sorry for your disappointment," said

Mrs. Ravenshaw; "and I trust my child isn't to blame, and that you won't mind it."

"I have always protested," replied Mr. Philip, eagerly, "against the false theory that elevates disappointment into an organic principle. I am not disappointed; and from the first moment when I saw your daughter until now she has gone far to realise my highest ideal of womanhood."

Mrs. Ravenshaw was bewildered. It occurred to her that perhaps, after all, this was an engagement and not a rejection; but she saw her mistake, for Mr. Ravenshaw rose and accompanied Mr. Philip to the door. The two men shook hands cordially. "We must meet again some day:" they said.

Bertie's father returned to the drawing-room.

"That's a fine fellow," he said, "in spite of all his crotchets. And many a woman might do worse than dote upon that ugly face of his."

"Mark my words," replied Mrs. Ravenshaw, "if that man had had one arm or a wooden leg, or some deformity, Bertie would have accepted him."

"You are putting forward a theory, my dear, that is incapable of proof."

"No such thing:" said Mrs. Ravenshaw.

“But there certainly is nothing against Mr. le Mesurier except his long-winded sentences, and I defy you to prove that there is.”

“I have no wish to prove it. But I think that poor child will have the head-ache if she sits crying in the hot garden.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

YES AND NO.

MRS. RAVENSHAW did not adopt her husband's suggestion. She left her daughter to choose the locality that pleased her best; and Bertie continued to sit under the lime-trees where Mr. Philip had made his declaration. Beyond the trees the hot sunlight danced upon the grass, and there was a quiver and ripple as of little waves of light and heat that played upon the distant shining leaves of holly and laurel. All around and above was the hum of insect-life. The limes were in blossom; sweet scent filled the air; bees innumerable droned among the branches; the whirring of small wings made an undercurrent of melody. Bertie had been too much absorbed in her own thoughts to notice it; but now, as she sat silent and sad, the stir and the life, the ceaseless motion and the music, attracted and soothed her.

“What a beautiful world it is,” she thought, “what a good world. And if the bees don’t like these lime-trees they can go to another garden.”

That thought did not make her happy. It suggested Mr. Philip on his way to the railway station; and after that! There would be no *after that*. She had lost her friend, and she had disappointed him. Could she have known, ought she to have divined, his views with regard to her! She remembered that one day Mr. Nicholl had said:

“I don’t know what can be the matter with le Mesurier. He is by way of constructing new heavens and a new earth, with special analogies between them; but I can’t make out whether this is intended to meet a personal or political emergency.”

Bertie recalled her surprise at this speech. She had repeated it to Mr. Brownlow, who explained that le Mesurier had a grand way of sweeping before him theories, arguments, facts, consigning them all to perdition and destruction, and raising airy and fanciful structures in their stead.

“And does he abandon these?” she had asked.

“Oh, yes!” was the reply; “ultimately he may do so. But his remarkable peculiarity is an

intense earnestness. He is profoundly impressed by the truth of his own doctrines ; his powerful, if somewhat fantastic, imagination makes him a most interesting companion. He will probably have swept away one set of cobwebs and spun another between his visits, for, although he is visionary, he is a man of active, vigorous intelligence."

Bertie recalled this conversation, an account of which she had written to her father. She remembered the pleasure with which she had heard Mr. Philip's new views discussed, and the merry laughter of the professors over the result of his physiological experiments. But with one exception they always laughed with Mr. Philip, and never at him. Nothing had gratified her more than that he had selected her as a friend and confidant. She was well aware that she had not always grasped his meaning, but she always found it grow clearer by degrees ; and Mr. Philip had a gratifying way of taking her intelligence for granted, which allowed her time to think over his remarks, and to wait until they received elucidation from something else. Every one liked him except Mr. Goldworthy Fynes ; and he one day, when Miss Crayston had spoken of Mr. Philip, had said :

“I don’t know if that man is most knave or most fool. I think he is a great deal of both.”

Bertie had flushed with anger, but she made no reply, for she remembered that, hard as these words were, Mr. Philip’s were harder when he spoke of Goldworthy Fynes and the school to which he belonged.

And now the whole thing was at an end. There would be no more of those pleasant meetings, when the quaint fancy of her companion had filled her mind with images gorgeous and grotesque. At every house in Minster Mr. Philip was a welcome guest; and whilst he visited the place, garden parties, pic-nics, sailing excursions, and rambles by cliff and shore were arranged in his honour. He was associated in Bertie’s mind with all the accumulated pleasure of the last three weeks. And now it was over; not only over, it was ended.

But there was something worse than her own loss. “Poor Trissy!” she thought. “She will never have such another chance.”

Trissy and Mr. Philip had not even seen each other, but in Bertie’s mind they were closely associated. She had so often referred them mentally to each other, had so carefully in her own

mind removed all obstacles to their union, and fitted them each to complete the happiness of the other, that the attitude Mr. Philip had now assumed was a death-blow to her most cherished hopes. "Poor Trissy!" she said. And she almost felt as if Trissy was a widow. It occurred to her that Trissy might like to have her room darkened, and her dinner sent up-stairs. Life couldn't possibly go on as usual after one had sustained such a loss.

Bertie rose and stepped out into the sunlight. She was about to cross the lawn and re-enter the house when Lizzie emerged from it, threw a shawl over her head as a shelter from the sun, and ran towards Bertie. Lizzie fell upon her sister's neck and wept.

"What is the matter? Has anything happened?" said Bertie, who was not, however, very much alarmed.

"Bertie, sister:" sobbed Lizzie, clasping Bertie's neck with both hands, "speak to me, say you forgive me. Swear it!"

"Oh, Lizzie, you are driving a pin into the back of my neck!"

"Sister, you are a sad, sad trifler:" said Lizzie, looking up with streaming eyes. "But speak, I implore you!"

"How can I, till I know what to say? Do be reasonable, and tell me what is the matter."

"Ah, Bertie. That spiritual pride of yours, and that love of argument and intellect! You see now what it leads to. But your loss is my gain; and you must promise, nay, you shall swear, that you do not grudge me my happiness."

"I begin to have a dim notion of your meaning, Lizzie; and you know I always told you that it was absurd to be so jealous of me, and that Dicky Gosling had no eyes for any one but you."

"Dicky Gosling, indeed!" exclaimed Lizzie angrily. "But it is in vain for you to try and lacerate my feelings. Fred warned me that I should have much to endure."

"No!" ejaculated Bertie. "Is it really Fred Wilmshurst?"

"And pray why not?" demanded Lizzie.

"Well, I don't know. It seems funny just at first; but I always thought you and Fred would get on well together."

"Indeed!" said Lizzie in a sceptical tone. "Then I wonder you didn't show it more. You have always done your utmost to attract Fred:" Lizzie tapped with her foot on the grass, and stood a little way back from Bertie; "but I bear no malice. It isn't in my nature. Fully and

freely I forgive you, sister, and I will never rest until Fred does the same."

"Thank you, Lizzie ; but I don't know what there is to forgive."

"Ah, Bertie, it may gratify your vanity to lead a man on till he makes a fool of himself ; but depend on it, he does not easily forgive you. And then the punishment falls on me."

Lizzie wept, but this time it was not on Bertie's neck. She tottered to the garden seat, and sat there sobbing with a handkerchief before her face.

"Fred has always loved me," she said, "but see how it will appear to others. Can I speak ill of my own sister ? No, never ! I will die first."

"Really, Lizzie, you may say anything you like, so far as I am concerned."

"Ah, ah, Bertie ! That Jesuitical mind of yours ! You deceive yourself ; but beware of the day of awakening and the day of reckoning. Beware !"

Bertie looked at her sister, who sat fanning herself with her pocket handkerchief, and sighed. She knew what was implied in a scene with Lizzie, and that the only way to avoid it was to give in, and to try and change the subject. So she sat down and said :

"This is most astonishing news, Lizzie. Do tell me when the event came to pass."

"But are you really surprised?"

"I am, indeed. No one has given me a hint on the subject, and I am just as much surprised as if you had told me the Cham of Tartary had come over to marry you."

"Ah, sister! Sad levity on a sacred subject, sad levity. But let it pass."

"Yes, do, there's a dear girl; and tell me when you received the proposal, and if you have said 'yes,' and all the rest of it."

"Bertie, friend of my childhood, be true to me:" sobbed Lizzie.

"I will, indeed," replied Bertie, taking her sister's hand. "I really sincerely congratulate you. I believe you will be very happy, you and Fred, for you have always suited each other."

"Then you won't try and get him away from me?"

"How can you say such things, Lizzie?"

"Ah, you won't promise! I knew you wouldn't! But you may use your utmost arts to beguile him. Fred is upon his guard. Moreover, he says nothing will induce him to see you. He left as soon as I had said the fatal word."

"Well, perhaps a meeting to-day might be

awkward:" said Bertie, who recalled the last occasion when she had seen Fred; "but you must tell him that I congratulate you both, and am truly pleased with the news you bring."

Bertie looked bright and smiling. She never could be really angry with Lizzie, who was, as all the rest of the family said, "such awful fun." But Lizzie was not satisfied; her sister evidently did not recognise the loss she had experienced and the inferiority of her position as keenly as she ought to do.

"Shall you be hurt if you are not invited to the wedding?"

"Yes," replied Bertie. "I think it will be a most unnatural thing, and very painful to us all. Fred has no feeling for me, and I have none for him that should prevent our meeting."

"Ah, sister, it will be a bitter thing for you to see me wearing the crown of honour; to know that I have obtained the treasure of a love which you sought in vain."

"Really, Lizzie, if you can't talk like a sensible woman we will end the conversation. I suppose it is natural for you to suppose that every one must admire Fred, and I am sure he will like it."

"Cruel, cruel!" sighed Lizzie, and then there was silence.

Bertie's patience was almost exhausted, and Lizzie knew it.

"Sister, was that tall, stout, elderly man Mr. le Mesurier?"

"Yes," replied Bertie.

"He passed the window whilst a 'yes' was trembling on my lips, and my beloved leant over me to lift it from them with a kiss." Lizzie clasped her hands and looked up towards the top of the lime tree.

"Well, and what did you think of Mr. le Mesurier at that critical moment."

"Sister, he dusted the knees of his trousers first with one hand and then with the other; had he knelt to you?"

The blood rushed to Bertie's neck and brow.

"You also have said yes? Oh, my darling sister," and once again Lizzie clasped Bertie in her arms, "this is what I have always hoped and expected."

"That really is impossible. You never heard the man's name till this morning:" exclaimed Bertie, who had spoken of Mr. Philip to none except her father and Trissy, both of whom she knew to be safe.

"Of course I did not know of this individual. But, sister, you are formed either for celibacy or

to marry an old man. I picture to myself every one of us married and settled, and with our children about our knees, and you, sister, are the little mother of us all."

"You'll find the children troublesome and embarrassing if they are to maintain that position," said Bertie, rising; "and I may as well tell you at once that there is no *little mother* about me."

"Ah, jesting Pilate:" said Lizzie, shaking her head archly as Bertie retreated.

Bertie sought her father, and found him in the dining-room, and as usual in the chimney-corner. Mrs. Wilmshurst was sitting by his side; she rose as Bertie entered, and kissing her, said:

"Bertie, you are the child of my choice, but Lizzy is a dear good girl. She really idolises my boy; and after all, Fred is a man who could not be happy with any woman who did not submit to him in great things and in small."

"I am sure you are right:" said Bertie, returning the kiss; "and I believe Lizzie and Fred will be happy together. Tell Fred that I send him hearty congratulations."

Mrs. Wilmshurst sighed. She would have preferred Bertie as a daughter-in-law.

"I have promised to join your mother, who is in the library:" she said.

Bertie was left alone with her father.

"Are you pleased?" she asked. "Do you think Lizzie will be happy?"

"Yes, on the whole I suppose it will do very well. Fred has been with me; he was lofty and magnanimous, rather in the Ercles vein. Even in the hour of triumph he couldn't forget certain slights. Lizzie had told him to leave the door open whilst he spoke to me, at least I presume she had done so, for, having shut it when he entered, he returned to set it ajar, and thus I saw your sister standing with her hands clasped in an attitude of entreaty, and leaning forwards."

"You should add, with streaming eyes. Lizzie would make the thing complete:" said Bertie.

"I suppose so. I have no doubt she would. It is a very extraordinary fact, and one of which I have never seen any explanation attempted," continued Mr. Ravenshaw, "but I should like to know why the eldest child of a family is so often a fool."

"But is it a fact?" asked Bertie.

"Undoubtedly; and for that reason I think it

a great advantage when the eldest born is a girl."

"Why?" said Bertie, rather coldly.

"Because if a woman is a fool she never does much harm. A man is different, a fool turns to drink, or to blackguardism of some kind, and is a terrible embarrassment."

"Father, dear, what a comfort it must be to you to have such a solid superstructure of girl in the family."

"Oh, ho. My little Bertie has her susceptibilities. Yes, my love, the girl is a very great comfort:" and Mr. Ravenshaw drew his daughter to him and kissed her.

"Did you see Mr. Philip?" whispered Bertie.

"Yes."

"Do you think he is very sorry?"

"Moderately. I don't think he is exactly what one would call in love."

"I am so glad of that, father dear. I do hope I am not to blame. Indeed, I thought Mr. Philip was a friend. It never occurred to me that he had any other feeling for me. You know how often I have said to you that I should like to have a male friend."

"You have; and you may remember that I have told you it was a mistake."

“Yes; but you didn’t tell me why.”

“Very well, then. Now I’ll tell you why. You will find male friends very apt to degenerate into lovers.”

CHAPTER XXV.

A BIRTHDAY TREAT.

THE summer was over, the long holidays at an end ; Bertie and Miss Crayston had returned to Minster. They were walking together along the cliff pathway, and talking of all that had occurred since they parted at Norlands.

The result of the July examinations had been made known. Bertie had taken a very high place ; and her parents, much gratified by her success, had given their consent to her return for an indefinite period.

“ The child must not be disturbed by the fear of a recall home : ” Mr. Ravenshaw had said. “ If all is well she shall remain at St. Mary’s as long as she wishes.”

Bertie was telling Miss Crayston this good news.

“ And now you see,” she added, “ I rank as a

third year's student, and I can go up for honours next July."

"You will have to work very hard, Bertie."

"Yes, that's the pleasure of it. But you must remember that good father of mine has given me three hours a day of Latin and mathematics all the holidays. I can go into the highest classes easily. You know my father was senior wrangler in his year. He has helped me immensely, and he says it has been quite a pleasure to him to go over the old ground. He has come to the conclusion that a woman really has got a mind," added Bertie, laughing, "and that it is very much in kind like that of a man, though probably it differs in degree. He has never said so, but it is my impression that he thinks a woman's mind, such as it is, has a tendency to deteriorate after marriage. He has the darkest forebodings as to the condition Lizzie will be reduced to when she has five or six children, and seems to think that one of the younger girls will have to be specially trained, so as to take an effective position in Lizzie's household."

"When is Lizzie to be married?"

"At Christmas."

"Are you going to the wedding?"

“Yes. We are the best of friends. Lizzie writes poems to Fred, and I help her.”

“Won’t he find a difference in the style now you have left?”

“I don’t think so. He hasn’t got very much sense; or rather, now that I have come back to the professors, I ought to say he hasn’t much critical faculty. Lizzie’s poems will do very well for him.

‘Oh, my love, I think of thee;
True love, dost thou think of me?’

That’s Lizzie’s style; she has learnt it from the mottoes in bonbons. It seems to do very well when a man is in love. They are both as happy as they can be. In fact, as the boys say, Fred is awful spoons upon Lizzie.”

“I am glad to hear it:” laughed Miss Crayston. “And now I must go home, Bertie. The council meets this afternoon, and I have documents to prepare and arrange.”

“I don’t want to go in just yet:” replied Bertie. “You know how often we have said that we would cross the ravine, go through the wood on the opposite side, and find the bridge across the Dove, which Mr. Philip used to talk about. Shall I undertake an expedition in that direction?”

“Yes, do. You have three hours to spare before

lunch, which must be at two o'clock to-day. I will walk with you to the ravine. You had better cross at the coast-guard station, and we can get directions from Metherell."

Miss Crayston stopped to discuss the weather and to ask Metherell about sails on the horizon ; Bertie waved a farewell and began a steep descent.

The Dove, a small, insignificant stream flowing through the Minster valley, finds its way to the sea through a deep ravine, which extends inland for nearly a mile, and terminates seawards in huge precipitous cliffs. At the base of these, amid sand and stones, the little stream seems to lose itself at low tide, and Bertie, choosing her way and following Metherell's directions, crossed it easily and began the ascent of the opposite side of the ravine, a narrow track through the gorse. After a time she found stunted thorn trees, dwarfed and brown. The branches stretched eagerly inland and grasped at the valley for help against the fierce wind that drove them backwards from the sea. All matted and tangled they seemed to be, and long filaments of grey lichen hung from them. About half a mile from the coast the ravine trended away to the north, and stretched almost parallel with the coast line. There was shelter from the sea-wind ; the gorse,

instead of being a low, scrubby covering for the steep hill-side, grew tall and free, and great bushes of broom waved amidst it. Oak trees, elm, and the sycamore were before her; and Bertie wandered on without seeking a path. The way was easy and pleasant, dry twigs crackled beneath her feet, and dry brown leaves lay thickly under the trees. The robin was twittering his autumn song; from time to time she saw a squirrel watching her from a branch or stone. Again the valley changed its direction, and stretched onward towards the east; pasture land appeared on either side; the banks were becoming lower and lower, but the stream seemed to increase in volume the further it was from the sea.

"There must be a lock somewhere," Bertie thought, "and I have missed it." In this she was correct. Metherell had told her to cross the Dove close to a lock; but when she recalled this the way was pleasant, and she resolved to go on, even at the risk of having to retrace her steps.

A mile further and she was following a foot-path by the side of the stream, gathering pods of yellow iris, and admiring the level rows of even, scarlet seed; watching great tufts of willow herb, the glowing leaves of crane's bill, and the gaudy grandeur of tall battalions of ragwort.

Suddenly she heard voices, children apparently quarrelling, and men and women who certainly did not agree. A few minutes later she came to a wooden foot-bridge with a small gate at each end of it. She lifted a latch, crossed the bridge, passed through a second gate, and climbing the river bank emerged upon a meadow.

“The pretty lady!” shouted a boy of eight years old, and ran towards her.

He was followed by two younger girls, who caught her by the dress, saying :

“Kiss me, kiss me.”

Bertie recognised the Tredwen children, and replied :

“No ; thank you. No kisses for you.”

The girls uttered a prolonged “Oh !”

“Do give me a kiss :” urged one of them.

Bertie shook her head and advanced ; whereupon the boy Paul shouted with delight :

“They wanted to bite you !” and the girls fell upon him in anger.

“For shame, children !” exclaimed Bertie.

“Who’s that knocking Master Paul about on his birthday. I’ll give it to you :” called a harsh, angry voice, and a woman ceased for a moment an altercation which had hitherto engrossed her.

She was kneeling before a table-cloth spread on

the grass, and covered with food. She grasped a wine-bottle in each hand.

"Now, Mrs. Hawkins," exclaimed a man's voice, "you give me back them bottles. You hadn't no right to go to my dining-room for 'em, and I won't have it."

"You jest mind your own business, Mr. Stubbs. A butler with a place like yourn has got plenty to look arter:" retorted Mrs. Hawkins with a sneer.

"Never you mind my place. You keep your own; and I tell you master's orders was: 'No wine for the nussery.'"

"It's very fine of you to say that when you sends up a bottle every Sunday."

"More than I will do again:" says Mr. Stubbs fiercely. "I tell you two champagnes and two ports is out of all reason for four children and two nusses."

"And I tell you," exclaimed Mrs. Hawkins, "that master Paul is the heir; an' 'e shall have what I think good for him. An' you ain't agoin' to put me off with your ginger-beer, nor yet your gooseberry wine, nor any other rubbish. He shall keep his birthday like a young gentleman, and if you like to drink 'is 'elth you can just dore one of these 'ere corks."

"Give me back them bottles:" said the butler roughly, advancing to Mrs. Hawkins.

"She rose from the grass, and stepping up to him with a bottle in each hand, she whispered something that had the effect of making him very pale. He looked uneasily at her and said:

"Well, then, you take the responsibility?"

"I do:" she replied, and returning to the table-cloth she clapped down the two bottles of champagne triumphantly, and produced a third, a bottle of port, from a basket.

There was a fierce gleam in the butler's eyes, but he turned away and walked towards a house, which Bertie saw was at a short distance through the trees.

The children were silent spectators of the scene. Bertie had gone to a little distance with the youngest child, the little fellow who had sat with her in the cave. She picked him great spikes of purple loose-strife which grew by the river-side, and he told her it was brother Paul's birthday, and they were going to have a picnic.

Bertie was angry and ill at ease. She wondered if Mr. Tredwen knew it was his boy's birthday, and why he did not see how it was kept.

The nurse, who recognised her, advanced, and

asked her, quite civilly, if she would stay with the children, saying master Paul wished it.

"That I do:" said Paul. "I want you to stay awfully; and then you must make a speech and drink my health."

Bertie turned to the nurse and said coldly:

"Of course you don't give wine to the children?"

"All them as can afford it gives wine:" replied the woman, insolently. "And these'll have their share, and learn to take it like ladies and gentlemen."

Bertie made no reply.

"There, if I haven't forgot the champagne glasses!"

"Let me go, Mrs. Hawkins:" said the under nurse.

"What's the good of your going? Stubbs won't give 'em to you. I'll see whether he'll let me have 'em or not."

So saying Mrs. Hawkins toiled up the steep bank; and Bertie approaching Paul began to whisper to him, and Paul laughed and clapped his hands.

"Oh, what fun!" exclaimed Paul, "what jolly fun!"

"And then," said Bertie, "I'll take you into

the woods and show you the squirrels, and we'll find their hoard of nuts. The nuts are only just ripe, so they can gather plenty more for the winter store, even if we do take a few; and you shall pick seed-pods that we can roast for coffee; and I will make great chains of horse chestnuts. I have got plenty of string, and we will make a collar for Teddy, and you shall drive him through the woods."

"Yes, yes:" shouted Paul. "But make haste; I want to see the splash, and hear the bottles break. Make haste."

Bertie advanced to the table, took up the bottles, and walked with them towards the bridge, accompanied by Paul leading his little brother Teddy.

The two little girls screamed:

"Nurse, nurse, she's a-goin' to break the wine-bottles."

Bertie stood on the bridge and dashed one bottle after another on the stones in the rocky bed of the stream. Then she turned to face a furious woman rushing down the steep bank, and having seen all that had occurred.

Mrs. Hawkins was out of breath when she reached the children, which gave Bertie an opportunity.

"I shall tell Mr. Tredwen to-day what I have done," she said, "and he will approve of it."

For a moment Mrs. Hawkins was subdued. She looked up at a pale, resolute face, and heard the clear low tones in which Bertie spoke, and for an instant it occurred to her that submission was her best chance.

The little girls, quick to discern her hesitation, jeered at her.

"Poor old nurse! She's lost her wine:" they said; and she turned upon them, seized and shook them, and assailed Bertie with a torrent of vulgar abuse.

Bertie stood her ground resolutely. She had taken Teddy in her arms, and held Paul by the hand.

The nurse, screaming, crying, beating the little girls, and shaking the nurse-maid, did not approach her.

"Not one mouthful of dinner shall they have, not a mouthful, any one of them:" she gasped, sitting exhausted on the ground, and dragging towards her pies and fruit and cakes, and pushing them into a great basket.

The girls uttered a prolonged howl, Teddy whimpered, and Paul's face darkened.

"Come with me," said Bertie to the boys, "I will take you into the woods."

She led them away over the bridge. The nurse called loudly and angrily after her, but she took no notice. Teddy hid his face on her shoulder; Paul clasped her hand tightly; and Bertie walked calmly and steadily onwards.

"Let her go!" at length said Mrs. Hawkins. "Let her go, and a good riddance."

It occurred to the woman that if Bertie lost her way other events might be overlooked.

"Nursy dear:" whined the little girls, "mayn't we have some pigeon pie?"

"Lor', Mrs. 'Awkins," exclaimed the nurse-maid, "you won't never let 'em go into Dedman's Wood all by theirselves."

"She've a-took 'em," replied Mrs. Hawkins, savagely, "and let 'er bring 'em back to their Pa."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PIC-NIC.

BERTIE and the boys walked on in silence. They entered the wood, climbed a steep, narrow path, and were soon away from all sight and sound of the flowing stream, the angry nurse, the meadows and the house.

Under a wide-spreading beech tree Bertie paused :

“We will sit down,” she said, “and make plans.”

“What have we got to eat ?” asked Paul.

Teddy watched eagerly as his brother put the momentous question ; and Bertie for all answer put her hand in her pocket and produced a small box :

“Did you ever taste chocolate ?” she said.

“Is it nice ?”

“Very nice. When gentlemen go up the

mountains in Switzerland they take it in their pockets, and eat it to make them strong."

"Oh, give me some:" said Paul.

"Yes; I shall give you both some, and then we will go through the woods to the lock gates, and you shall have a gipsy dinner."

"What's that?" asked both children.

"You'll see when the time comes. Gipsies never know till the time comes; but there's a fire out of doors, built up with stones, and you may help to make it."

"Oh, jolly, jolly:" exclaimed Paul. "Shall we pick up sticks?"

"Yes; and put them in a heap, just here:" replied Bertie.

The children, pleased with the task, ran about collecting the dry wood, and Bertie sat down to think. She was somewhat puzzled at the position in which she had placed herself. She had taken the two little boys away from their nurse, and what was she to do with them? Ultimately, of course, she would have to take them back again; but in the mean time? And then, again, how was she to find Mr. Tredwen? She wished to give the children up to him; and had resolved not to expose Paul to the anger of the nurse and the punishment threatened for an act which she

herself had originated and carried out. Suppose she should miss the lock on her return, what would have to be done; the children tired and hungry, Miss Crayston anxious, and Mr. Tredwen angry and alarmed! Better get on at once, she concluded, and lose no time. Calling the children she tied their little bundle of wood together with a piece of string. Paul was preparing to sling it over his shoulder with a pocket handkerchief, when the boy exclaimed:

“Listen! There’s somebody whistling!”

They listened, and heard the sweet clear sound of a whistle alternating with scraps of song.

“That’s Metherell,” said Bertie, and she called his name, whilst Paul whistled in reply. A few minutes later Metherell was seen approaching, a telescope slung by his side, and a bag over his shoulder.

“Here you be, miss:” he exclaimed. “My missis was at her father’s, and said you wasn’t that way, so her sent me to look arter you round by Dedman’s Wood; but you ain’t got far.”

“No; we have not really been far in the wood, for I don’t know this part of it. It looks dark and bewildering, and I thought of going down the hill again to the banks of the river, and so getting to your father-in-law’s at the lock.”

“That’s the best thing as you can do. That there wood’s a gharstly old place ; and you’m best out of it. Them’s Muster Tredwen’s young gentlemen, I’m thinkin’.”

“They are :” said Bertie ; “and I want to send a note to Mr. Tredwen and another to Miss Crayston. Can you take them for me ?”

“Why, however be you goin’ to write notes, miss.?” asked Metherell with a grin.

Bertie took out a small pocket-book and said :

“Very short ones, Metherell ; but can you take them ?”

“Well, miss, I can’t take ’em myself, but I’ll give ’em to my missis, she’m going into Minster. Her put this in my bag just now, and I’m thinking it won’t come in badly :” said Metherell, taking a paper parcel from the bag on his shoulder.

“My missis,” he continued, addressing Paul, “makes a parsty such as you never did taste, young sir, and, by the looks of you, I should say you’m hungry.”

Paul and Teddy capered at the sight of the apple pasty, and almost snatched it out of Metherell’s hand.

“Oh, for shame !” exclaimed Bertie, blushing.

She thought of the children at home. How Lenny would have drawn back and held up his

little head and said: "No, thank you." Even Maggie would have thought it shame to eat up a working man's dinner.

"Have you got any more?" asked Paul, after the first bite.

Metherell replied by putting a piece of pasty into the left hand of each child. They retired and sat down side by side under a tree; the younger boy fixed his eyes intently on his brother, and almost choked himself in his eagerness to eat quickly, and take large mouthfuls, like Paul.

"Got no mother, you see, nor nobody to look arter 'em, as you may say. Leastways no gentle-folk, nor nobody as cares for 'em:" said Metherell, meditatively, as he watched the children.

"Take it easy, young genelman:" he continued, addressing them, with a grin on his face. "Make it last out, for there ain't no more where that come from."

"The little 'un's a rare trencherman," he said, turning to Bertie, "and what a face he've got. He wasn't out in the garden when the food was on the table."

Bertie made no reply. She was beginning to feel uneasy. At length she said:

"Mr. Tredwen does not know the children are here, and Miss Crayston expects me home by

this time, so I want to let them know where I am."

Metherell took off his cap and rubbed his head. He saw something was wrong, but had too much innate delicacy to ask what it was.

"I ain't sure as I should take 'em to the lock," he said, "if you'll excuse me for making so free. They do seem quarrelsome and uneasy like; they'll get drowned, or something o' that sort. You stop about here, miss, and I'll send my boy 'Arry, I shall find him in the wood. He knows the way well enough, and then you can wait here till their pa comes to fetch 'em."

Bertie was relieved at this proposal. She arranged with Metherell that Harry should go round to Mrs. Metherell, and bring such simple food as could be procured; and the boy was then to be her guide to a part of the wood called Dedman's Hollow, where Mr. Tredwen would meet her, and take the children to Upton, whilst she returned to Minster with Harry. Two hours later Bertie and the children were sitting round a little white table cloth; a fire was smouldering near them, and Harry was pouring tea out of a small kettle into the children's mugs. Two bottles which had contained milk, and the remains of bread, butter, eggs, and apple pasty,

together with blackberries and apples, were on the table.

"Now, Paul, I have drunk your health," said Bertie, "and you must drink papa's health."

"I don't know how:" replied Paul.

"Good health to dear papa:" said Bertie; "and Teddy will drink it too."

"Papa!" exclaimed Teddy, as a man was seen making his way through the underwood at the side of Dedman's Hollow.

"He'll spoil everything:" said Paul, sulkily, as Mr. Tredwen, looking grave and stern, approached them. He glanced keenly at Bertie, at the boys, at the table. He laid his hand on the bottle which Bertie had taken up:

"Excuse me, Miss Ravenshaw, the children never take wine."

"It is milk:" replied Bertie, as she poured it into Teddy's cup.

"I beg your pardon. I thought it was wine."

"*I* thought you'd have knocked us all over:" said Paul: "it was just like a robber rushing out of the woods, wasn't it?"

"Who's that boy?" asked Mr. Tredwen, taking no notice of Paul's exclamation.

The boy pulled his hair and came forward, saying, "Please, sir, 'Arry Metherell."

Bertie was nervous. Mr. Tredwen was certainly neither pleased nor courteous. He looked suspiciously about him, examined the gipsy fire and the kettle hanging over it, smelt the empty milk bottle, and turned over the basket with its treasures of horse-chestnuts, hazel nuts, hips, and haws.

Paul grumbled : "You'll spoil everything, papa. I said you would." And Bertie began to feel uneasy.

"Have you had my note?" she asked.

"No:" was the reply, as Mr. Tredwen poured out some milk and tasted it. "No. I have been four hours in the wood looking for you."

"How did you know we were here, papa?" asked Paul.

"Nurse told me:" replied Mr. Tredwen, gravely.

"Did she tell you about the wine?" asked Paul, starting to his feet. "Isn't it jolly fun?"

Bertie had not spoken. She watched Mr. Tredwen intently, as if she expected to read in his face the cause of his annoyance.

Little Teddy lay down on the grass. Mr. Tredwen lifted him tenderly, kissed him, and turning to Bertie, said :

"What is the matter with him?"

“He is tired and sleepy. He has been running about for a long time. Give him to me.”

She stretched out her arms, and Mr. Tredwen turning towards her, looked into her eyes. He knelt down, but did not give her the child.

“What a fool I am!” he said, looking intently at Bertie. “What can I say to you? I have been four hours in torture.”

“Why?” asked Bertie. “I thought there was no danger in this wood. We have often walked in the Minster end of it, and as I do not know this part Metherell sent Harry with me, so that I might not lose my way. He thought we had better wait till you came. Give me Teddy. Let him sleep for half-an-hour whilst we pack up the things and prepare for home. I have been wishing you would come for such a long time. We waited tea for you.”

Mr. Tredwen laid the child down by her side, and Bertie threw a light mantle over him.

“He is fast asleep:” she said, looking up.

“What is Paul doing?”

“He has got potatoes and apples buried in the hot ashes, and is looking to see if they are sufficiently cooked. May I tell you about this morning?” Bertie asked.

“Do:” he replied, and turned away from her.

"I begin to see that I acted foolishly, and most probably have made you very anxious:" she said. "I hope you will try and forgive me."

"Yes:" he replied, turning to look at her, "yes; you certainly have made me anxious."

"I have been brought up to think it such a wrong thing to give wine to children, that when I saw nurse with champagne and port for them I quite forgot I had no right to interfere."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Tredwen.

"Well, you know, I threw the bottles into the Dove, and broke them:" said Bertie, blushing. "Paul laughed, and nurse was so angry with him that I took him with me into the woods. I hardly knew that I was carrying Teddy till we had gone some distance."

"See, papa!" exclaimed Paul, who had drawn near. "She took them like this. Crash they went, such a splash and such a jolly row; but *I* didn't break them. It wasn't *me*, papa. Will it kill the fishes? Won't it be jolly fun to see them all lying dead on the top of the water?"

Mr. Tredwen was still on one knee by the side of the sleeping child. He looked from Teddy to the drooping head of the young girl, who bent over the little fellow and almost mechanically made him comfortable.

"Will you tell me," he asked in a low tone, "why you brought the children here? I could not understand the story nurse told me, but she made me very anxious."

Bertie looked up. She was pale and troubled. Her lips trembled as she spoke, but the clear, truthful eyes were fixed on Oliver Tredwen as she narrated the events of the day.

"Splash the bottles went; such a crash against the stones:" exclaimed Paul, who was standing with one hand on Bertie's shoulder. "You must let me do it, papa, for a treat. I ought to throw the bottles, because it is my birthday."

"Well, Miss Ravenshaw," said Mr. Tredwen, "and after you had poured out this libation, of which I do not at all disapprove, pray what did you do next?"

Bertie, considerably relieved at the tone of this question, proceeded to recount their adventures in the wood. Mr. Tredwen sat down by Teddy's side and listened. Paul supplied minute details as to the food, its quality and amount; and Harry Metherell drew near and described the erection of the fire, and the building of an oven under it.

"We washed the potatoes, papa," said Paul,

“they were most beautiful, quite juicy, something like apples, but with a different taste, and they are quite hot already.”

“Will Miss Crayston be anxious at your prolonged absence?” asked Mr. Tredwen.

“I trust she has received my note, and then she will not be at all uneasy. I said I had come into the wood with the children:” replied Bertie.

“I will see her and explain. I must ask her if she can help me. You have interposed to-day like a good angel,” and Mr. Tredwen smiled, “but I am disposed to wish you had been an evil one.”

“Why?” asked Bertie.

“Because you might have carried off the nurse and left me the children. It would have been an admirable solution of the difficulty.”

“I am sure Miss Crayston will help you,” said Bertie, “she always knows exactly the right thing to do. I used to fancy that tact was something artificial and untrue until I knew her, and now I see that it really is insight, not only into circumstance but character.”

Mr. Tredwen smiled approval, and Bertie continued:

“Miss Crayston would not have made you

anxious as I have done. She would have foreseen the trouble that must come from such a rash, ill-advised step."

"Do not blame yourself. You have laid me under infinite obligation to you. I think it needed violent measures to open my eyes to the actual existing state of things. I can't talk about this matter to you ; but perhaps Miss Crayston will allow me to tell her what grave cause I have for anxiety, and to consult her as to a possible remedy."

"I am sure she will:" replied Bertie.

"What are the boys doing at that fire?"

"Examining the condition of the baked apples and potatoes. They began with six of each, which have been reduced by tasting to two, and I believe by the time they are really cooked, there will be one left to divide between us."

"Does the Metherell boy know his way in this wood?"

"Yes ; quite well."

"Then he shall go to the stables with a message for the coachman. I will order a carriage to be sent to a gate about a mile from here. It will be better for you to ride home, and may save Miss Crayston some anxiety."

"Thank you. I shall be glad to get home."

Mr. Tredwen took out a card-case, wrote a message, and gave instructions to Harry.

"Papa, may I go with Harry, and then ride back on the coach-box?"

"I think not. You had better stay here."

"I don't want to stay:" whimpered Paul. "I want to go with Harry. It's a nasty old place; and the last potato was a bad one."

"Won't you let him go?" asked Bertie. "Are you afraid that nurse will see him?"

"Oh, I can prevent that:" said Mr. Tredwen, adding a few words to the card.

"Teddy will be less difficult to manage without his brother; that is, if he wakes:" said Bertie.

"Has he been very troublesome?"

"Not very; but little boys are sometimes unhappy with older ones, and these two don't seem to get on together."

"Poor children!" sighed Mr. Tredwen; and then he turned to Paul and said, "You may go if you like."

"Come on!" exclaimed Paul. "Come on, Harry."

"I will leave the basket here," said Bertie,

calling to Harry, "the basket and all the other things."

"You can leave 'em," said Harry, "they'm safe enough. Nobody won't find 'em in Dedman's Wood."

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEDMAN'S WOOD.

"WE shall have nearly an hour to wait:" said Mr. Tredwen, looking after the retreating figure of the boys; "but even in that way we shall save time, for they will race together through the woods. What should you like to do meantime?"

"Perhaps we had better let Teddy sleep:" replied Bertie. "He is a fat little fellow, and soon gets sleepy. Is he strong?"

"I am sure I don't know. I have always considered him strong; but Upton does not seem to suit him, he has had more or less cold and sore throat ever since we have been here."

"Then I will rouse him:" said Bertie. "It will not be good for him to sleep in this wood."

Mr. Tredwen lifted the sleeping child; and saying that he would carry him, walked onwards, followed by Bertie.

“I shall take you a little out of the way,” he said, “to show you a very fine view of the whole Minster valley, the town lying under the shelter of the cliff, and the blue line of sea on the horizon.”

“That must be the view Mr. Philip has told me of. Don’t you call the place from whence you see it the Bower?”

“Yes; it is a favourite resort for picnics. I wonder you have not visited it.”

“I have been at Norlands all the summer. There were only two picnics before I left Minster, and each time they were on the shore.”

They walked on in silence. Mr. Tredwen carried the child, who was between waking and sleeping, and very cross. Bertie suggested that they should go direct to the gate at the entrance of the wood; but her companion said that now he was away from the path it would be difficult to find the way, and he would go forward to the Bower, from whence there was a direct road to the gate. The trees grew straight and tall, many of them were already bare of leaf, and the grey cold sky and heavy clouds rested like a roof upon the forest. There was no song of birds, nor any sound of life or movement. Bertie walked by the side of her companion; and the child fretted and complained.

"Give him to me:" she said; "perhaps he will be happier with me."

"He is heavy:" said Mr. Tredwen; "I cannot allow you to carry him. Sit up, Teddy, like a man; and don't cry."

"See," said Bertie, "here is a nice apple I have saved for you. Will you have it?"

The child took it and began to rub his nose with it.

"Put him down for a little time," Bertie said, "and let him move about and get thoroughly awake."

"I think that will be a good plan," replied Mr. Tredwen; "for the fact is, I have been thinking as I walked, instead of looking out for landmarks, and I am not quite sure where we are. If you will wait here I had better look about me."

"You won't go far?" said Bertie, as the child uttered a prolonged howl at his father's disappearance.

"No:" replied Mr. Tredwen, returning; "but I have missed a tree which used to guide me from the Hollow to the Bower, and I am sure we are in the wrong direction."

As he moved forward, Bertie saw him snapping twigs from the trees, and she knew that he

was taking precautions so as to find his way back.

“We are lost !” she thought to herself, with a certain feeling of elation at the adventure, “lost in Dedman’s Wood.”

If it had not been for the tired child she would have enjoyed an adventure in the wood ; but Teddy, with a finger that pulled down one corner of his mouth, and a monotonous dismal wail, was not a cheerful companion. He refused to stand or run about, or eat his apple, or to do anything but cry for his nurse and his supper ; and Bertie in despair sat down, took him in her arms, and hushed him to sleep. As she sat leaning against a tree the light diminished, the shadows grew dark and deep, there were strange rustlings among the dead leaves, and a snapping of twigs.

“Is it you ?” she said, again and again, thinking that Mr. Tredwen had returned. But there was no reply ; only a startled scampering away of little feet.

Bertie was not afraid. She thought of the small living creatures, mice, weazels, hedgehogs, even snakes, without any fear of them and their doings ; but she would have liked to be moving about, and not chained to her seat with the

heavy, sleeping child in her arms. There was a rustle and a flutter, and then from the hollow of a tree which was near her gleamed two large round eyes.

"The owls are coming out:" thought Bertie; "how pleased Lenny would be to see the bright eyes. Wake up, Teddy, wake up," she said, "before papa comes back; and I will show you the wise owl watching us; and there is another one peeping over his shoulder."

Teddy did not reply, but he struck her in the face as she kissed him.

"They really are disagreeable children:" thought Bertie. "Why did I have anything to do with them?" And she resigned herself in acquiescence to Teddy's will.

The darkness increased, and Bertie bethought her that her voice might guide Mr. Tredwen to them; so she stood up. "Vater, ich rufe Dich:" she sang; and the grand old battle-song pealed forth among the trees. At length footsteps drew near.

"Is it you, Mr. Tredwen?"

"Yes," he replied; "and is it you standing under the trees like a white spirit? Your voice has guided me. I am ashamed to tell you I have lost my way; but I think we can get out of the

wood now without much difficulty. Not far from here we come upon the scent of the forester's wood fire; he has a cottage by the gate. I can't think how I have gone so far astray; but at any rate we must be close to the outskirts of the wood."

He took the child, Bertie assured him that she was not tired, and they walked side by side through the dim wood. Mr. Tredwen was silent.

"I and mine bring you nothing but misfortune:" he had said, and he did not speak again.

Bertie was sorry for him. She saw by his eager, hasty movements, by the way he sprang forward to break off branches that impeded her movements, or to kick stones out of her path, that he was more troubled than he choose to say at their disaster.

"Shall I sing?" she asked; and without waiting for a reply she began, "Einsam bin ich nicht alleine:" and Mr. Tredwen walked quietly by her side.

"Will you sing it again?" he asked; and she complied.

"I don't know why I have sung on this day:" she said.

"You are like the nightingales:" he answered;

“your joyous summer-time must be at hand, although we mortals in the darkness and the cold do not recognise it.”

“It is my happy winter that is at hand:” she replied; “and see, do you know where we are?”

“I hope we are near the forester’s gate.”

“We are close to Dedman’s Hollow. There is our fire.”

Mr. Tredwen stopped.

“You are right:” he said. “I must be bewitched. I thought the smoke came from the forester’s fire, and have brought you back again.”

“The boys made up the fire, and it is burning beautifully. Do let us try and wake Teddy with some hot tea!” exclaimed Bertie, as she busied herself with the basket. “We can give the poor little man his supper.”

“Can you give yourself some tea?” asked Mr. Tredwen.

“Yes; and you also. I think we shall both be glad to have it. I have plenty of bread and butter, and some hard-boiled eggs; but don’t wake Teddy until everything is ready.”

“I won’t wake him at all. You have wrapped him up so warmly in this mysterious garment that he can take no harm. I will try no further

experiments, but take you direct to the Lodge when we have had a cup of tea."

"Very well, then, if you will sit down and keep Teddy in your arms it will be ready in five minutes; our kettle is on the fire."

"I don't like you to wait on me:" said Mr. Tredwen.

"I like it very much:" replied Bertie. "I shall throw on all the dried wood and make a blaze. It is quite gloomy now, and these dead branches and hollow stumps will take most fantastic shapes. If you please you shall tell me an awful ghost story."

"No, I will tell you nothing of the kind; and I should like you to sit down and pour out the tea. There is a certain unreality about this adventure, and a suspicion of sorcery in the way you are producing food out of that basket, which disturbs me."

"It is white magic:" said Bertie, laughing, "you need not be frightened; it is only the black magic that hurts. Here is your tea, and here are bread and butter, and cold, hard-boiled eggs; and so we are safely down to the commonplace of an ordinary meal."

Teddy began to turn and moan; he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and looked about him.

“He knows we are eating :” laughed Bertie, “and now he can have his supper.”

Mr. Tredwen, occupied with the child, took nothing, and Bertie remarked it.

“I am not hungry :” said Mr. Tredwen. “I cannot eat.”

“Don’t your arms ache ?”

“They are stiff.”

“I should think so :” said Bertie. “A sleeping child is such a dead weight ; but Teddy will be good and walk when he has had his supper.”

Teddy made no reply to this appeal. He was eating in a slow, sleepy manner.

“We may expect a relapse into slumber at any moment :” said Mr. Tredwen.

“We may :” replied Bertie.

“Hark ! There is some one whistling. It is Metherell. He is coming this way.”

“Well, sir,” said the coast-guardsman, “here you be. I’ve come to see arter ’Arry. My missis she’s a-beginnin’ to worrit.”

“Harry’s all right :” replied Mr. Tredwen. “I sent him to the stables with a note, and he will be waiting with the carriage at the forester’s gate. I have lost my way, Metherell, and have been wandering about and trying to find it. Just now I thought we were close to the lodge,

but discovered that the smoke from the picnic fire had misled me."

"It's a gharstly old place:" said Metherell, who had but one form of words in which to describe Dedman's Wood.

"I wanted to go to the Bower," explained Mr. Tredwen, "and lost my landmarks, though I was here not a month ago."

"They'm always a-cuttin' and hackin' the trees, and a lot was felled about the Bower last week; but if you and the young lady is ready, us won't lose no more time. You give me the young master, sir; he do seem that sleepy he can't keep his eyes abroad."

"I am quite ready:" Bertie said, as she completed the arrangement of the basket. "We will make a fresh start, Mr. Tredwen; but I shall quite expect to come back and find ourselves at the old place."

"Dedman's Wood is a gharstly old place in winter time, and in the dark:" was Metherell's final remark, as he glanced around him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CLOUDY WEATHER.

WHEN Miss Crayston left Bertie on the cliff she returned to St. Mary's, where she found Lady Mary Ellice and Mrs. Milner awaiting her.

These two ladies, with whom she was a great favourite, had asked permission from the council to make the rooms of the Lady Resident "pretty"; and having obtained it, proceeded to carry out their own views at their own expense.

Thus it came to pass, that instead of bare walls and cocoa-nut matting the Lady Resident found soft warm carpets and rugs, pretty water-colour sketches which Lady Mary had made in Algiers, Italy, and elsewhere; artistic bits of old furniture, a writing-table in Bertie's window, a comfortable chair for herself, and, best of all, a minute dining-room, made by means of sacrificing a large cupboard and appropriating part of an adjacent passage. Curtains, flowers, and a

few ornaments completed the work of transformation.

“You are too good to us:” said the Lady Resident, as the ladies advanced and welcomed her with a kiss. “Bertie and I were quite bewildered last night at the sight of these pretty rooms. We thought there was some mistake, and that we were not intended to occupy them.”

“There has been a mistake,” replied Lady Mary, “but we have tried to rectify it; and now you must forget our apparent want of consideration in the past, and let us try to atone for it.”

“Indeed we have been very happy and most comfortable in these rooms:” exclaimed the Lady Resident. “They had everything that was needful.”

“It is very sweet of you to say so:” replied Mrs. Milner. “Have you noticed the curtains? do you approve of them? and which picture does Bertie like the best?”

And so with many questions they passed from one object to another until Lady Mary said:

“We must not take up Miss Crayston’s time. I dare say she has work to do.”

“I have some papers to prepare for Mrs.

Armstrong, and documents to procure for two or three of the professors who are coming here to look over them before the council meeting, but there is plenty of time."

"I had hoped that we should see Bertie:" said Mrs. Milner.

"She left me at Metherell's cottage and proposed to cross the ravine, go through Dedman's Wood, and find her way home by following the stream until she comes to the lock bridge."

"I hope she will not go far into Dedman's Wood:" exclaimed Mrs. Milner. "It is impossible to find one's way in that place without a guide. It is a wilderness of stunted trees without road or path, and it extends for miles."

"You need not be alarmed:" replied Miss Crayston. "Bertie will not lose herself. She is always at her best and brightest where there is a difficulty."

The two ladies left the College, and the Lady Resident seated herself at the window. She was very pale, her brow was slightly contracted, and her eyes had a fixed and anxious expression. Some pain was mingled with the pleasure of the surprise planned for her; indeed after a few moments the pain seemed to predominate.

A harsh voice roused her from her reverie.

“How do you do, Miss Crayston?” said Miss le Mesurier, advancing to the table and putting down an alpaca umbrella. “Pray what do you think of these rooms?”

“It is extremely kind of the council to have bestowed so much thought upon me; most unexpected, I had almost said undesired. I fear they have gone to considerable expense.”

“Yes:” replied Miss Barbara, who did not consider it worth while to explain what she knew that Lady Mary and Mrs. Milner would conceal; “yes, I am quite sure these fantastic affairs are never cheap; and I don’t believe any of these things *were* really cheap, though we have had nothing dinned into our ears for the last fortnight but *bargains*.”

The Lady Resident looked uneasily at her arm-chair, and heartily wished the American in its old place.

“However,” continued Miss le Mesurier, in a rasping tone, “the council must try to secure the gratitude of every one employed in the college. Everything has its price, and of course we must expect to pay for your services as well as for other things.”

Miss Crayston started and turned away. The speech and the manner in which it was delivered

made it alike impossible and unnecessary to answer. And thus it came to pass that Miss le Mesurier was disappointed. Instead of eliciting a stinging retort she had reduced the Lady Resident to silence.

After a pause it was Miss le Mesurier who spoke.

"Are there any letters?" she asked.

"There are several in the office."

Miss le Mesurier left the room as Gibson entered with a note, which ran as follows:

"I am in the wood with the little Tredwens and Harry Metherell. You must not expect me home until you see me."

Miss Crayston asked who had brought the note, and when she heard that Mrs. Metherell had left it on her way to Minster, she felt no anxiety on Bertie's account, and busied herself with preparations for the council meeting.

The council consisted of fifteen persons; eight gentlemen and seven of the ten members of the Ladies' Committee.

"The men have as usual secured their own preponderance:" wrote Miss Kimberley Finch in one of her early letters; and the saying recurred to Miss Crayston when, an hour before the meeting, Professor Goldworthy Fynes entered the office.

"Will the meeting be well attended?" he had asked.

"Yes; all the ladies will be present. I think they will form a majority."

"No," replied the Professor; "that, at any rate, we need not fear. As soon as I joined the council I insisted that a vote, and also a casting vote, should be given to the chairman, Principal Ellice, or our sex is sure to be in a minority, and that is what I cannot submit to."

Miss Crayston did not reply.

"You are very early:" she said after a pause.

"My colleagues are coming to meet me:" he replied; "we want to talk things over. I was deputed to make certain propositions to the ladies."

The two friends, Brownlow and Nicholl, entered the office as Miss Crayston was leaving.

"Well:" exclaimed Goldworthy Fynes, advancing to meet them.

"I have failed to do anything with Mrs. Armstrong."

"Just what I expected:" replied Mr. Brownlow, smiling.

"I asked her," continued Mr. Fynes a little fiercely, for he had noticed the smile and resented the suspicion of having suffered defeat, "I asked

her what she expected with regard to examinations, and said that the professors were prepared to make large concessions in deference to the wishes of the trustees ; but she replied that the question must come from the council, as she had neither authority nor desire to treat privately of a matter that concerns the whole institution."

"Just what I expected:" reiterated Mr. Brownlow. "I told you it was a mistake to make any private appeal."

Fynes gave him an angry glare and turned to Professor Nicholl.

"It is to be hoped that we shall hear no more of the impossibility of co-operation with the professors:" said that gentleman.

"Mrs. Armstrong has put herself very much in the wrong," resumed Mr. Fynes, "as I expected that she would do."

"Her position is of very little consequence:" said Brownlow. "But if Lady Mary and Mrs. Milner go away this winter we shall have trouble."

"How, and in what direction?"

"With the trust fund. It seems to have been a loan to the college, and there is no trust-deed forthcoming."

"So much the better:" exclaimed Mr. Nicholl.

"That must be in our favour if it affects our position at all."

"Not all in our favour. Don't you see," said Goldworthy Fynes, turning pale, "that if this is the case we are entirely at the mercy of women, a state of things in which we cannot possibly acquiesce. It is a point that must be cleared up at once."

"There is also the question of the lease:" continued Mr. Brownlow. "No one knows anything about it. We have always assumed that Miss Ellen Green owns the lease and has sublet it to the college, but our assumption may be without foundation; the other ladies may be joined with her as trustees."

"We must meet the difficulty resolutely, and at once:" said Goldworthy Fynes, rising and throwing back his hair; "we must lose no time in ascertaining our position and our rights. Don't you agree with me, Nicholl?"

"In a general way I am rash enough," replied the Professor, "but in this case, as a matter of policy, I think we had better not lay too much stress on any question connected with the funds of the institution, or refer to it otherwise than incidentally."

"You are quite right," said Brownlow. "If

we are to impress the neutral part of the committee favourably we had better allow the ladies the monopoly of everything like combativeness."

"Impossible:" exclaimed Goldworthy Fynes. "I cannot rest until we have ascertained our rights, and the nature of our position."

"Let the trustees define them:" urged Mr. Nicholl.

There was an impatient gesture from the Latin Professor, and Mr. Nicholl continued with a smile:

"That is a course which requires patience; and I have no doubt Fynes would rather throw away the scabbard and taste the joy of battle."

"I have not a word to say against such a policy when we are tired of the struggle:" said Mr. Brownlow; "but that time has not come, and just now I think our object is to play such poor cards as we have with a view to secure the odd trick."

The last words struck the ear of Professor Walmsley as he joined his colleagues.

"A very odd trick:" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" was the enquiry.

"Miss le Mesurier has written to warn the Principal not to incur any liabilities on behalf of

the college on the strength of the trust fund whilst there is an uncertainty about it."

"The very thing we were talking about:" interposed Mr. Brownlow.

"You have seen Miss le Mesurier, have you not, Walmsley?" asked Goldworthy Fynes. "I met her just now, and she said she had had a very satisfactory interview with you."

Mr. Walmsley passed both hands through his red hair. "Did she?" he exclaimed. "And pray did you ask her meaning?"

"No," was the reply in a frigid tone; "it was no business of mine. She volunteered a good deal of information; but I never ask questions unless I have a right to demand an answer."

There was silence for a few moments, and then he resumed:

"Ten days ago Miss Ellen Green informed me that there were no funds at the disposal of the college. I concluded, that at our next meeting we should probably have the trust-deed examined; but I urged on her in the meanwhile the propriety of communicating with the council without delay. I have no doubt that in consequence of my protest Miss le Mesurier wrote to the Principal and sent for Walmsley."

"Yes; she sent for me:" said that gentleman,

“and she talked for half-an-hour about the uncertainty of the trust fund.”

“I hope *you* asked what she meant by an uncertainty?”

“I did. But she merely replied: ‘I presume that the trustees have power over the fund.’”

“And this is a *satisfactory interview!*” exclaimed Mr. Nicholl. “I really think, Fynes, that without indiscretion you might have asked for further information, especially as it seems that the letter and the interview were both suggested by you, and that you know more on this subject than any one else.”

Mr. Fynes threw back his head and adjusted his spectacles:

“I suppose,” he said, “that Miss Ellen Green spoke to me before speaking to the council in order to deprecate any unfavourable opinion I might form if I heard of the matter for the first time at the meeting. As this implied that she cared to ascertain what I thought about it I considered myself entitled to urge that the Principal and professors ought to be communicated with. If I had heard that these ladies were advancing claims with regard to the trust fund from any one but one of themselves I should not have thought of alluding to it in

conversation with Miss Green, because she might have properly said to me: 'Mind your own business.' Similarly, though I felt considerable curiosity, Walmsley, as to your *satisfactory interview* with Miss le Mesurier, I no more asked her than I do you what was the nature of it."

Mr. Nicholl rose and walked to the fireplace. "I suppose we ought to admire your discretion:" he said, and once again there was silence for a few minutes.

It was broken by Mr. Brownlow, who said:

"It is my opinion that the trustees are being urged on by Miss Kimberley Finch. Depend upon it, the lease, the trust deed and the fund are safe enough. They hope to gain concessions from our apprehensions; they think that if they can convince us that they have absolute power over the funds we shall give way with regard to the examinations and the Lady Resident. My advice is, that we do nothing. What do you say, Nicholl?"

"I don't altogether agree with you. It is my impression that Miss Kimberley Finch would not have gone so far unless she had known the college to be absolutely in the power of the trustees. We must look to some fortunate accident to extricate us from our difficulties; nevertheless,

I think with you that at present we can do nothing."

"In my own case," interposed Goldworthy Fynes, "I should not lose a day in ascertaining my rights."

"Suppose we find that we have none!" suggested Walmsley. "It will be far better, as Brownlow and Nicholl say, to leave the initiative to the ladies."

"It never ought to be left to them:" exclaimed Fynes, sharply, and the other men smiled.

"Depend on it, we shall do well to commence this session as if no change in our relation to the trustees had taken place:" urged Nicholl; and the two friends coincided with him.

Goldworthy Fynes was never patient under opposition, and always resented the setting aside of his advice. He added with great bitterness as he was about to leave the room:

"I believe it will never do to shuffle through the session without bringing things to a point; the longer we go on in this way the more we shall be involved in difficulties, and consequently at the mercy of the trustees."

"If that fellow ever marries," said Walmsley, as the door closed, "I shall expect to hear that he hunts his intended bride all through the

town, and nearly tramples her to death in the gutter, by way of settling the question of the respective attitude of the sexes, and her fitness to become the object of rational adoration. I wonder why he pays so many visits to Miss Ellen Green."

CHAPTER XXIX.

DIVISION OF POWER.

"I SHOULD like my attendance-book, if you please, Miss Crayston:" said Mr. Walmsley.

"Before the meeting?" asked the Lady Resident in some surprise.

"If you please."

"Oh, very well; I will try and find it."

"Allow me to assist you:" and the professor went to her side as she turned over some books in a table-drawer.

"I need not trouble you, Mr. Walmsley."

"It is no trouble."

And it certainly was not very much trouble merely to stand by the side of the Lady Resident and take up in an absent way, one after another, the books she had laid aside.

"Have you had a pleasant holiday?" he asked.

"Very pleasant:" she replied. "I spent three weeks with the Ravenshaws at Norlands."

The professor sighed ; and Miss Crayston, who had been rather alarmed by his sighs before the holidays, resumed rather hastily :

“ Miss Ravenshaw is a candidate for the Fossey scholarship. I wonder whether she has any chance of obtaining it ? ”

“ A very good one : ” replied the professor, who was diverted from his intention by the mention of a favourite pupil. “ I should say probably the best.”

There was another sigh, and the Lady Resident resumed with some haste :

“ I am told that Mr. Otto Venning has written a protest against girls being allowed to compete for a scholarship.”

“ On what ground ? ”

“ Injury to their moral nature, and the incapacity of women for intellectual effort.”

“ Otto Venning is a man of genius, undoubtedly,” said the professor, “ but he is smothered in petticoats.”

“ What do you mean ? ” asked Miss Crayston.

“ He is surrounded by invalid women who worship him. Such a man always has a low idea of woman’s intellect and a high one of her moral nature.”

“ And well he may : ” laughed the Lady Re-

sident. "I certainly noticed what you say when he was staying with the Principal in June. He was most eloquent on the injury and injustice to women inflicted by all the present educational movements, and upon the impossibility of their ever standing on an equal footing with men."

"What is the general effect of such language upon girls?" asked the professor, drawing a chair and seating himself at the table.

"Very much," replied the Lady Resident: "that which would be produced upon boys who were told that no amount of tattoo would make them real original Red Indians. They don't want it. I find that the girls at St. Mary's want to learn history and grammar. They have no large ulterior views."

"Ulterior views:" repeated the professor. "Allow me:" and he took from her hands all the attendance-books, and replaced them in the drawer.

"I have not given you your own book, Mr. Walmsley."

"It is not necessary. I shall not want it until Monday; but the fact is, I had something to say to you."

"Ah, yes:" said the Lady Resident, driven to her wits' end; "and I am most anxious to hear it."

"You are!" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise, and with a shade of disappointment, as he rose from his chair.

"Yes:" she replied, turning towards him, and with just a tinge of insecurity in her demeanour; "I am most anxious to know if you think the managing ladies intend to acquiesce in the result or non-result of the late disturbance about examinations."

The professor walked to the fireplace in silence, and Goldworthy Fynes entered the room.

The Lady Resident repeated the question.

"You can answer that question, Fynes, can you not?" asked his colleague.

"I cannot:" replied Fynes; "and we shall not be much wiser after the meeting than before."

"What with the blank nescience of one of those ladies, and the inferential incredulity of another, our meetings are becoming highly amusing:" said Mr. Walmsley, as he stooped to take up the poker.

"Do you know," said Miss Crayston, "I am sorry for Miss Ellen Green; she is always so unhappy after the council meetings; she is so full of scruples."

"Yes," replied Mr. Walmsley, angrily, "she is full of scruples, but she pays no heed to them."

He was about to stir the fire, but finding that there was none in the grate he replaced the poker and left the room.

"I am told," said Goldworthy Fynes, addressing the Lady Resident in very grave tones, "you have formed the idea that I despise and dislike women."

"I have never said such a thing:" she replied with some surprise; "and I really do not know how any one can state what idea I have formed about your opinions."

"If I know anything of myself I am not answerable to such a charge," continued the professor, "which, in the eyes of a Positivist is, of all others, the most serious that can be made."

"But I make no charge against you!"

"You cannot, I am sure, have formed such a conclusion from your own observation."

"Certainly not:" said the Lady Resident.

"Am I wrong in supposing that it is an impression left by the lecture I gave last February, and which, as I hear, very much offended some of the ladies present?"

"But I was not one of those ladies, and I have formed no such impression."

"Of course," continued the professor, "we all of us, every week of our lives, suffer more or less

from misrepresentations we never hear of; and it is only this morning I chanced to learn that I lie under an imputation of so grave a nature."

"Many months have elapsed since you gave that lecture:" said the Lady Resident; "and during that time every lady must have had an opportunity of seeing that, whatever theory you may hold, your conduct to women shows very high consideration and respect."

"I am glad to hear you say so; and I hope you will allow me to send you a little abridgement of a work of Comte's, which has recently been published. There is a chapter on woman which I should particularly like you to read."

"Thank you."

"I shall not have time to fetch it now, as I see Miss le Mesurier coming up the hill. She has a large blue book in her hand."

"I suppose the meeting to-day will be important."

"I think it will. I intend to try and provide some remedy for the general preponderance of ladies."

Miss Crayston bent over the open book-drawer, and Professor Fynes eyed her keenly, for he almost thought he detected a smile.

"I shall hope to resume my conversation as to

the Positivist idea of woman on another occasion :” he said. “I see it is now three o’clock.”

“Yes,” replied the Lady Resident ; “and I believe the council has assembled.”

Miss le Mesurier whispered to Mrs. Armstrong as the professor entered the council-chamber. The members, several of whom had not met for some months, were interchanging enquiries as to the past summer tours and the future winter plans.

The Principal took the chair ; the business of the council began ; the arrangements for the ensuing session were approved of and adopted unanimously. Mrs. Armstrong incidentally remarked, that the question of examinations would come on later, and Lady Mary added that there would be plenty of time before the ensuing summer, and that the last reports were very gratifying. Miss le Mesurier looked as if she was about to contradict, when the chairman, Principal Ellice, asked for the list of candidates competing for the scholarship offered by Sir Bartle Fossey, a county magnate, who was a member of the council.

The list was produced and read over by Mrs. Armstrong.

A few questions were asked as to some of the candidates, and in answer to an enquiry from the

chair it was stated that the subjects for examination were mathematics, Latin, and the English language. Cordial thanks from the council were voted to Sir Bartle for the encouragement offered by him to the students in St. Mary's, and the list received the approval of the council.

"One moment, if you please:" said Mr. Walm-sley. "It occurs to me that I did not hear the name of Miss Ravenshaw."

Mrs. Armstrong referred to the list.

"It is not here:" she said.

"Who received the applications of the candidates?"

"I did:" replied Mrs. Armstrong.

"If the name is not on the list it is because Miss Ravenshaw is not a candidate:" said Miss le Mesurier, sharply. "We can proceed to other business."

Principal Ellice looked at her benignly, but did not proceed to other business.

"There is some mistake:" continued Mr. Brownlow. "Miss Ravenshaw is certainly a candidate. My wife spoke to her on the subject this morning."

"If there is a mistake it can easily be rectified," said Lady Mary, "we can add the name at any time."

"I think not:" Miss le Mesurier said, with great decision; "this is the last day on which names can be received. The Ladies' Committee stipulated that all candidates should be approved of by the council."

"A very unusual course:" said the chairman; "but since it has been adopted we must be careful to make no omissions."

"I have heard nothing from Miss Ravenshaw:" said Mrs. Armstrong.

"I am quite sure," interposed Mrs. Milner, "that when I was here this morning I saw a note for Mrs. Armstrong on the table; and I am equally sure that it was in Miss Ravenshaw's writing. Have you received a note from her?"

"I have heard nothing at all of her proposed candidature:" said Mrs. Armstrong.

"She has probably changed her mind:" said Mr. Fynes, coldly. "It is not an unusual course for a lady to take."

"I am very glad to hear it:" came from Miss le Mesurier in such harsh tones that Lady Mary started. "There are so many unpleasant reports about Miss Ravenshaw that it would not be at all gratifying to see her elected as a representative student of St. Mary's."

This was a very injudicious speech, and was

warmly protested against by many present. But Miss le Mesurier refused either to withdraw or explain it. Mrs. Armstrong and Miss Ellen Green had been whispering together, and Miss Ellen Green announced :

“I believe I am justified in saying that Miss Ravenshaw will not resume her studies at St. Mary’s this session ; and no doubt that is the reason she has not sent in her name. We really need not occupy the time of the council with such an unimportant matter.”

The professors, however, were not to be silenced :

“Miss Ravenshaw has been preparing for these examinations throughout the summer :” said Mr. Walmsley. “She is now in the College, and I shall not feel satisfied without some explanation as to the reason of her withdrawal, especially after what Mrs. Milner tells us about the note which she saw on this table. Miss Crayston is in the house also, and I propose that we ask for an explanation.”

“Really, gentlemen, you take up our time unnecessarily :” snarled Miss le Mesurier.

But the chairman said the suggestion was a good one, and asked the secretary to carry it out.

“Stop a moment :” exclaimed Mrs. Armstrong.

“Let me look through my papers once again;” and she commenced a hurried search in the bag, and finally turned out the contents upon the table.

“That:” said Mr. Walmsley, putting his fingers upon an envelope, “that is Miss Ravenshaw’s writing.”

“It is unopened,” stammered Mrs. Armstrong, angrily, “and I am not familiar with Miss Ravenshaw’s writing. If it is an application it ought to have been sent to my house before noon to-day, and addressed Honorary Secretary. The printed regulations have been out long enough to inform every one of the steps to be taken by candidates.”

“There are ten or a dozen unopened letters:” said Miss Ellen Green, coming to the rescue of her friend, who was red and tremulous. “This note was left on the office table, with tradesmen’s bills and circulars, none of which have yet been examined.”

“Perhaps it will be as well to look them all over:” suggested the Principal; and Mrs. Armstrong, hastily tearing open the note in question, passed it to him.

“It is from Miss Ravenshaw:” he announced; “we will add her name to the list.”

"Excuse me:" interposed Miss Ellen Green, "but that list has been already confirmed. Of course I do not wish to throw any difficulties in the way of Miss Ravenshaw, but I think, in my position, filling as I do the chair in our Ladies' Committee, that my friend Miss Kimberley Finch would advise me not to re-open a question which has been decided by vote."

"It can't be done:" stated Miss le Mesurier, with great decision. "I have taken legal advice on the subject."

"We are about to rectify a mistake:" said the chairman, coldly, but with courtesy; and he drew the list of names of candidates towards him and added that of Bertie Ravenshaw.

After a few moments of somewhat embarrassed silence the meeting broke up.

A few of the professors remained together, and Mr. Nicholl, throwing himself back in his chair, stretched his arms above his head:

"What is the meaning of this!" he exclaimed.

"Have you not heard," asked Fynes, "that Miss Ravenshaw has refused le Mesurier?"

"Of course I have. He tells every one; but I think his sister would have been much more angry if Miss Ravenshaw had accepted him."

There was a general smile, and Fynes continued :

“ I really don’t see why we should take up the cudgels on behalf of Miss Ravenshaw. We have enough on our hands without that, and it is not worth while to embitter our relation towards the managing ladies.”

“ What do you mean by embittering our relations ? ” asked Professor Brownlow.

“ Well, I take it, that for some reason these ladies do not wish Miss Ravenshaw to compete for the scholarship. They may have a very good reason ; and it may be better for us to make no enquiry with regard to it.”

“ We can have nothing to do with an act of injustice : ” exclaimed Mr. Nicholl, warmly.

“ I do not call it injustice. I call it good policy.”

“ Then I am sorry to hear you say so.”

“ It is quite possible,” interposed Walmsley, “ that no excuse is needed. The letter may have been overlooked. The explanation was natural and good. There were, as Mrs. Armstrong pointed out, a considerable number of unopened letters, and if there had been a less eager defence I myself should have had no suspicion of the honesty of these ladies.”

“We really have nothing to do with their honesty:” replied Fynes. “It is too hard work to be honest one’s self to have time to look after the honesty of other people. For my own part I simply profess a slightly suspicious ignorance of the principles of these ladies; but I don’t see why that need affect my conduct towards them any more than it does towards the majority of the persons I know, and with regard to whom I entertain the same feeling.”

“We have shelved the examination question:” said the professor of mathematics, by way of changing the conversation. “At any rate there is one welcome reprieve, and one difficulty the less.”

“I was a little afraid of the enthusiasm of some of our friends,” confessed Mr. Nicholl, “weren’t you, Fynes?”

“Councils never are enthusiastic about systems, nor is it desirable they should be:” replied the person addressed.

“Individual members of them sometimes are enthusiastic, as you must confess.”

“And great nuisances they are:” replied Fynes, as the professors were about to separate. “For it is contrary to all probability that their views will coincide with the views of persons actually engaged in the work of teaching.”

“That man has the habit of saying the right thing in such an offensive manner that it is almost impossible not to contradict him:” exclaimed Mr. Nicholl, as he and his friend Brownlow walked home together.

“I don’t know that he says the right thing in a worse manner than he says the wrong.”

“Perhaps not:” was the laughing rejoinder.

CHAPTER XXX.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.

THE managing ladies returned to Miss Ellen Green's together, and partook of afternoon tea in silence.

A fire burned brightly upon the hearth ; there were flowers in the room ; the squirrel worked his little cage in great excitement at the sight of his mistress and the sweet cake on the table, but no one noticed him.

"No sugar:" exclaimed Miss le Mesurier in a warning tone, as Miss Ellen Green stretched out her hand to take the sugar-tongs.

Whereupon Miss Ellen Green withdrew her hand and began to cry.

"You may well cry:" exclaimed Miss le Mesurier, tartly. "To think that we sit at that council table with ten people who have not contributed a shilling toward the fund! They use our house, and vote away our money, and

won't allow us a voice in anything. I tell you plainly I'll not put up with it. I will *not*; and there is the long and the short of the matter."

"But, Barbara:" sobbed Miss Ellen, "what are we to do?"

"Get rid of that woman and the girl:" fiercely rejoined the lady addressed; "they have done more to undermine our influence than anything else. We have seen for a long time that every man was up in arms when anything was brought forward that affected the Lady Resident, and now we are to experience the same treatment with regard to Miss Ravenshaw."

"I have grave doubts," said Mrs. Armstrong, "whether we really ought to allow Miss Ravenshaw to compete for the scholarship. The whole family story will come out, and if it does, the Winstanleys will assuredly recall their promise to send the three girls to Miss Flint after Christmas."

"Of course they will:" assented Miss Ellen, tearfully.

"We must have the advice of Miss Kimberley Finch:" announced Miss Barbara with firmness; "it is she who has made this discovery with regard to the Ravenshaw family history. She is a woman of the world, and knows how such a

thing will be looked on. We had better apply to her and be guided by her advice."

The two friends assented willingly to this proposal, since it relieved them of the responsibility of decision in a matter of some difficulty.

"There are only seven girls in the boarding-house, and no fresh applications, except from our friends, the Winstanleys:" resumed Miss Barbara.

"I am told," said Miss Ellen Green, with a sob in her voice, "that the Lady Resident has refused thirty-nine offers."

"Of marriage!" exclaimed the two auditors.

"No, of boarders; and I don't hear that any of them were recommended to go to Miss Flint."

"Disgraceful!"

"Do you think," continued Miss Ellen, wiping her eyes, "that anything connected with poor Nora Stewart can have become known?"

"It is impossible to say. I believe Miss Ravenshaw to be capable of anything."

"Unhappy girl!" said Miss Barbara, sentimentally. "Philip has indeed had a narrow escape."

"Miss Kimberley Finch did all she could to induce the Ravenshaws to place her under proper control. Of course she knew nothing of Mrs.

Ravenshaw when she went to call, but she says that she had her suspicions from the very first."

"Dear, dear:" sighed Miss Ellen.

A letter to Miss Kimberley Finch was written, and the ladies resolved to take no further step without her advice.

"There is one point gained:" said Mrs. Armstrong: "Lady Mary resigns her seat at the council, and we shall no longer have two persons voting, with only one opinion between them."

"Disgraceful!" exclaimed Miss Barbara. "I often wonder how a woman with as much will and character as Lady Mary shows in most things can be guilty of such mean subservience."

"But perhaps she really agrees with the Principal:" suggested Miss Ellen Green.

"Nonsense! They have been married this twenty years:" replied Mrs. Armstrong.

"Miss Kimberley Finch approves of man and wife sitting together at a committee. She thinks it will eventually tend to promote the independence of woman, and to free her from the galling yoke of custom."

"I don't believe it. They'll stand by each other in public whatever they may do in private. The man will always make his wife vote against her conscience and the general good."

"Lady Mary is still a member of the Ladies' Committee:" announced Mrs. Armstrong.

"I am sorry to hear it. Miss Kimberley Finch considers her an obstructive."

"I wonder who will replace her on the council?"

"My brother says it will be Oliver Tredwen:" replied Miss Barbara; "and so long as it isn't Philip himself we have cause to be grateful."

"Why?"

"Don't you know?" said Miss Barbara, tremulous with anger. "He is now at the feet of the Lady Resident."

The three friends rose and separated in silence.

Meanwhile the Fossey exhibition was the one topic of conversation throughout Minster. Otto Venning's letter was printed in the local University Gazette, and was warmly defended and eagerly attacked. There was as much discussion with regard to the female intellect as if it had been a new discovery; and argument waxed as fierce over it as if it had been a religious tenet. The evil result of rewards, attached to the intellectual efforts of women, was demonstrated in the clearest manner; whilst on the other hand the advantage to girls of having their studies brought

out into broad daylight, and subjected to rational tests, was proved beyond a doubt.

Had Sir Bartle done a good thing or an evil? This was the question that agitated the thinkers in Minster; but "Who stands the best chance?" was the question that excited the warmest interest.

The Lady Resident was applied to for information with regard to the several candidates. She maintained a discreet silence.

The professors refused to answer any inquiries on the subject, and no one was bold enough to apply to Miss Flint. Lily Carter was a candidate, but she had left St. Mary's House and was boarding with Mrs. Early, wife of an evangelical curate in the town.

This step had been warmly protested against by Miss Flint and the managing ladies, but the Carters were firm. They made no complaint, said they had none to make, but they thought the walk from Mrs. Early's to the college would be good for Lily, and they had made up their minds.

The ladies were compelled to recognise the finality of this process, both with regard to the Carters and several other parents.

"I don't think the food is quite all that it

might be:" sighed Miss Ellen; "and I should never be happy again if I thought our poor Nora had suffered in consequence."

"You know it was nothing of the kind:" Mrs. Armstrong angrily interrupted; "but I often wonder if Miss Crayston could be capable of such a breach of confidence as to—to—"

"She is capable of anything:" urged Miss Barbara; "but on that point she has certainly been silent, or it would have been all over Minster."

The three ladies were walking together on their way to the college when this conversation took place, and had been talking over the various candidates and their respective chances. Mrs. Armstrong and Miss Ellen Green were obviously uncomfortable as they entered the office; and Miss Crayston noticed their troubled aspect as Miss le Mesurier asked that Miss Ravenshaw might be requested to join them in the ladies' waiting-room.

Bertie advanced with so bright a face to greet the three ladies that Miss Ellen Green was touched with compunction, and shook her head sorrowfully as she ejaculated: "Oh dear, dear!"

But the two friends looked sternly at her, and Mrs. Armstrong, asking Bertie to be seated at a

small table, took a packet of papers from her bag and laid them before her.

The interview lasted more than an hour. At the expiration of that time the three ladies passed through the office, and the Lady Resident noticed that Miss Ellen Green was unusually pale, and the other ladies uncommonly red. She expected Bertie to follow, and looked up every time the door opened. When half-an-hour had elapsed, and no Bertie appeared, she rose to seek her.

Entering the small room she found the young girl kneeling at the table with her head buried in her arms.

“Bertie!” exclaimed the Lady Resident.

Bertie lifted a face blanched by emotion, a tearless face with lines of suffering about the mouth and brow. She did not speak; and Miss Crayston in much alarm said:

“What has happened?”

“Don’t ask me. Please don’t ever ask me. I can’t tell you!”

“But, dear child, you are ill, you are suffering. Can’t you let me share your sorrow, whatever it is?”

“Please don’t ask me:” replied Bertie, with trembling lips. “They have broken my heart. It would kill me to speak.”

She started to her feet with sudden energy.

“Don’t look so unhappy :” she exclaimed. “I can’t tell you ; indeed I can’t. To-morrow or the next day, perhaps, you will help me ; but not to-day. I dare not repeat what they have said. It is impious even to remember it.”

“But, my dear Bertie, I can’t see you like this——”

“Don’t, pray don’t :” interrupted Bertie. “I shall *die* if I have to speak.”

She started up, left the room, and Miss Crayston followed her sadly and in silence. For two days Bertie went about her duties as usual, attended the classes, was present at a meeting held in the hall, and accompanied Miss Crayston in her walks. On the third morning at professor Brownlow’s class she suddenly slipped from her chair and fell, fainting, to the floor.

Great was the consternation in the class. The girls gathered round their companion ; and the professor ran down-stairs to fetch his wife, who had accompanied him, and to ask Miss Crayston to come.

When they entered the class-room a group of girls stood silent and alarmed, whilst Lily Carter knelt by Bertie’s side, chafed her hands and sprinkled water on her face. She moved

uneasily, and Miss Crayston raised her in her arms.

"Father, father:" she said, in a half-articulate whisper, "father, is it true; is it true, father?"

Mrs. Brownlow, who was kneeling by her side, took her hands and said:

"See, Bertie, you are in the class-room, and you are better now."

Bertie looked at her:

"Yes," she said; "I am better." And with a sigh she rose, and taking Miss Crayston's arm, she left the room.

Later in the day Mr. and Mrs. Brownlow were sitting together in his study.

"Bertie's illness," said Mr. Brownlow, "has created quite a sensation; every one is talking about it. It is most unfortunate that it should have taken place just the day before the examinations."

"Have you seen Mr. Walmsley?" asked Mrs. Brownlow.

"Yes; he is quite cut up about it. He says he never had such a pupil. She would have been sure to take the Fossey Exhibition, and in a manner to do honour to St. Mary's."

"Perhaps she will be better to-morrow:" suggested Mrs. Brownlow.

"No, no; impossible. It is a regular break down. Every one has seen it coming on for some days past. The fact is, women are splendid at a spurt, but they have no staying power, and inevitably come to grief under prolonged and steady work."

"Now, Jack, I am ready to bet you anything you please that work has nothing at all to do with Bertie's illness."

"My dear," said Mr. Brownlow, "if there is one thing I dislike more than another, it is to find that you are ready to bet."

"Beg your pardon, John. I thought your remark a trifle horsey, so I ran along the same line. However, if you really object, you should make a bet with me. If I was to bet and lose I should be cured."

"My love, I understood that your object was to bet and win."

"Oh, Jack, don't argue. You know how I hate it."

Whereupon they both laughed, and then Mrs. Brownlow added,

"You men think you know everything, and yet I dare say there is not one amongst you has discovered that Bertie has not a thought for these examinations, and scarcely knows what you are

all saying and doing. She was perfectly well three days ago; and she is well now, but she is very unhappy about something, and I think it is connected with her own people at home."

"Your intuitions are often so happy," said Mr. Brownlow, "that I prefer to suspend my judgment just at present. But what leads you to this conclusion?"

"Because Miss Crayston knows there is something. I see that she is watching Bertie with the greatest anxiety. Bertie would keep back nothing personal; she is too sensible and right-minded to make Miss Crayston unhappy on account of a headache or a fit of sickness. There is something on her mind, and she cannot decide that it is right to speak of it. So, John, I am going to help her; and I have ordered a pony-carriage. Don't look surprised, Johnnie; surprise always gives an air of feebleness even to the manliest countenance. I did not tell you, because I only made up my mind after I got home, and I intend to drive off alone and fetch Bertie. I shall take her to the Spindle Rock, and when we get there we shall sit down at the foot of the cliff, and she will tell me everything. I ordered the little carriage at three. Here it comes, and now, John, if you please, take your wife to the

door and get a rug and make her comfortable. Look after the boy whilst I am away, and tell the man to drive to St. Mary's."

"You may be right, my dear:" said Mr. Brownlow, with some hesitation, "but you take my breath away; you must remember that Bertie is under Miss Crayston's charge. Don't you think that you run the risk of being misunderstood, and that it will be better to allow things to take their natural course?"

"No, John, I don't. I agree so far with Mr. Early, that I acknowledge there is a great deal of depraved humanity about us all, and if you allow things to take a natural course they take a wrong course. Moreover, for some reason Bertie will not tell her trouble to Helen Crayston. I must find it out; and you must kiss me and let me go, like a dear, good hubby."

Thus adjured the professor accompanied his wife to the door, and looked after the little vehicle as it toiled slowly up the hill towards St. Mary's.

Bertie was sitting at her writing-table watching the clouds; a wind arose, and a sudden gust shook the window. She sighed, and got up slowly from her chair. Just then the clear, ringing voice of the young wife fell upon her ear.

"Bertie," exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, "I knew I should find you at this window. Put on your hat and come with me. I am going to the Spindle. The sea is grand to-day."

A momentary irresolution vanished from Bertie's face :

"Are you ?" she replied ; "that will be lovely. I won't be a moment."

She turned to Miss Crayston, who forestalled her question by saying :

"A drive will do you good, Bertie. It is just what I was wishing that I could give you."

And so Mrs. Brownlow and Bertie drove together over the breezy downs, and down the steep zigzag to the sea. The young wife told funny stories of her baby-boy and his wonderful doings, at which Bertie laughed ; they climbed, holding each other's hands, over slippery sea-weed and wet rock, and reaching the Spindle sat down side by side, and looked at the great waves leaping along, and chasing each other to the shore. Suddenly Mrs. Brownlow turned, and looking into Bertie's eyes, said :

"Bertie, something troubles you, and I want you to tell me what it is."

Bertie flashed out a look of surprise, and the swift colour mounted to her cheeks.

"Don't be angry, dear:" said Mrs. Brownlow. "You know I am not old enough to be discreet. But I love you dearly, Bertie, so dearly that I can't help seeing you are in trouble. Please tell me what it is, and let me help you."

Bertie did not speak, and Mrs. Brownlow continued:

"Do you know, I have got it into my head that the Kilkenny cats are at the bottom of it, and you don't know their ways as well as I do."

"The Kilkenny cats!" repeated Bertie.

"There, that's exactly what my husband has told me. He has always said that some day I should let those cats out of the bag."

"What cats?" laughed Bertie.

"Well, my dear, there are some females in Minster who are bound some day to fight together till nothing is left but their tails. That event will take place in the happy future. Meantime they are scratching and clawing at large. They are connected with an institution which John honours with his presence, and if you can't guess their names I will say no more; but nothing will convince me that a Kilkenny cat is not concerned in your trouble, whatever it is."

"Oh dear!" said Bertie, hesitating and blush-

ing; "I should like to tell you, but I can't; I really can't:" and then she started to her feet, and stood glowing and breathing short before Mrs. Brownlow.

"It is so cruel, and wrong, and wicked," she said. "How dare they say such things!"

Mrs. Brownlow did not answer, and after a moment's indecision, Bertie, speaking rapidly, continued:

"They say that my father married his kitchen-maid, that the marriage was irregular, that all his elder children are illegitimate, that my presence here cannot be tolerated, and that if I do not withdraw they will expose the whole affair."

"Oh, my dear," said Mrs. Brownlow, "this is serious:" and rising she went to Bertie, who stood stiff like an iron rod, and took her two hands. "We mustn't let them say such things; we must put a stop to it."

"They say," resumed Bertie, "that they have not mentioned this to any one, and will not if I go away, but that if I remain they will lay all the facts in their possession before the council at the next meeting."

"Not a rag of fact between them:" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow; "but that won't trouble them. Have they got letters, Bertie?"

“ Oh, yes, a great packet.”

“ Miss Kimberley Finch, no doubt ? ”

“ They did not say, but they kept on referring to the letters and reading from them.”

“ Was there anything true anywhere ? ”

“ Oh, yes : ” replied Bertie. “ They knew all about my father’s family ; that he left Kingshill to live at Norlands, and has made a large fortune as a shipping agent ; and that my aunt Priscilla quarrelled with him about his marriage, never saw him or any of us after it, and at her death left all her money to a hospital.”

“ I don’t suppose it would require great penetration to find out those things, Bertie ; but I don’t profess to know how to deal with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, so if you please we will go home, for I feel headachy and queer.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FACTS OF THE CASE.

MRS. BROWNLOW and Bertie rose from the Spindle Rock, and ascended the steep path leading to the summit. When they were half way up Mrs. Brownlow began to tremble and look pale. She sat down on a projecting rock :

“Oh, Bertie,” she sobbed, “to think that any one should try to hurt you.”

Bertie knelt down by her side and kissed her.

“Don’t cry,” Bertie said ; “please don’t cry :” and then they both cried together.

“Bertie,” said Mrs. Brownlow, checking her sobs, “I don’t think I am exactly a comfort to you, but I mean well.”

Bertie dried her eyes and smiled. “You have comforted me :” she said. “We shall both be all right in a minute, and then you must tell me what to do.”

“Oh, my dear, that is quite beyond me. But I fancy the next best thing to doing anything will be to go back to St. Mary’s.”

“Yes,” said Bertie, smiling, “we’ll certainly do that. What do you suppose I meant?”

“Why you naturally wish to go and slay those three females, and so do I. When we were children we had an old nurse who used to tell us about my grandfather; at one period of his life he seems to have occupied himself with ‘going around and brandashing a sword.’ I feel like that old man. I want to ‘go around’ and ‘brandash.’ Perhaps it runs in the family. I don’t remember hearing that my grandfather ever distinguished himself in any definite action, so perhaps that runs in the family also. Never mind, we’ll talk it all over with Miss Crayston. See, there is Mr. Oliver Tredwen on the cliff. He always reminds me of a Spaniard. He is so dark and stately.”

Mr. Tredwen advanced to meet them, and could not help noticing that something was amiss. Bertie was very pale, and had dark rims round her eyes, and red eyelids; whilst Mrs. Brownlow’s pretty mouth trembled like that of a child which has been crying, and tears glistened in her eyes.

“I fear,” said Mr. Tredwen, advancing, “that something has troubled you.”

“Yes, it has :” replied Mrs. Brownlow ; “but we can’t tell you anything about it.”

He looked at them, and then walking to the edge of the cliff, glanced keenly along the shore.

“Oh, they’re not there :” said Mrs. Brownlow ; “they all live in Minster, and they never walk by the sea. They think it sentimental.”

Bertie gave an appealing glance, to which Mrs. Brownlow responded by pressing her hand and whispering :

“Don’t be afraid, I won’t tell ; but I must just let myself out a little.”

Mr. Tredwen turned towards Bertie :

“I wish you could have told me what troubles you. You don’t know what an honour I should esteem it, to be of service to you.”

He lingered when they left him, and then hurrying after them, he begged for a word with Mrs. Brownlow :

“Pray, do not think me intrusive and inquisitive,” he said ; “but I must ask you one question. Ten days ago Miss Ravenshaw was extremely kind to my children, and took them into the woods. I went to find them there, and unfortunately missed the way, and wandered

with them until dusk. I have called three times since to apologize to Miss Crayston, but have not been fortunate enough to find her at home. Has that expedition anything to do with your present trouble?"

"Absolutely nothing:" replied Mrs. Brownlow; "and I am happy to say no one can have heard anything about it or we should have had an illustrated and enlarged edition before now. Miss Crayston was very sorry to miss you so often. Twice she happened to be at our house, and once at Lady Mary's."

Mr. Tredwen looked relieved.

"And I really may not help you?" he asked.

"Well, the only thing you can do just now is to find the pony carriage."

"I'll do that gladly; moreover, I happen to know that it is on the other side of the hedge."

As they were driving home, Mrs. Brownlow said:

"My husband thinks uncommonly well of Oliver Tredwen, and says that we shall like him."

Bertie did not reply. She was thinking with surprise that she had actually repeated those false wicked words, and had spoken them aloud to another person.

"I have brought back Bertie:" said Mrs. Brownlow to Miss Crayston: "and I must come in for ten minutes, though it is so late. Bertie wants to consult you, and I must hear your advice, for I am quite incapable of giving any."

They sat down, and Bertie told the story of her interview. All three ladies were very pale, but there were no tears this time.

"How cruel!" said Miss Crayston.

"Yes; and they know it to be entirely false!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow.

"I think we are not justified in saying that:" replied Miss Crayston. "I think, Bertie, I have heard that Mrs. Ravenshaw's family is not so good as that of your father."

"Is it not?" asked Bertie. "It is not an old county family like my father's, but I have never heard it is not good."

"Perhaps I am wrong, dear child, but it is a matter of no consequence. I would advise you to act in the same way whether it is all false or only partly so."

"And in what way?" asked Bertie.

"Live it down. Meet their cruel statements here, and let every one see that they do not touch you, or those dear to you. Let your life

and conduct speak for your parents ; show what they have been, and what you are."

"Yes ; that is exactly what I mean, and what I think!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow. "I couldn't get at it, you know, Bertie, but that is what I should have said, if I could have thought of anything but the three cats."

"How can I endure to live in this place when I know what they say and think of me and mine?" asked Bertie.

"You can endure it because you know that the only way to overcome falsehood is to let your life and actions show that it is false. I would not have you say a word, Bertie ; I would neither have you seek to defend those dear to you, nor retreat before the malice that has assailed them. What you are is a sufficient answer."

These words recalled too keenly the interview with the three ladies, and Bertie, in an agony of grief, threw herself at the feet of the Lady Resident, saying :

"I must go home ; I must go to my father !"

"No, no, no, darling !" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, struggling bravely with her tears. "You mustn't do anything of the kind. Just imagine the sorrow you would take with you.

You cannot hide it from those who love you. You couldn't even keep it from Helen and me, much less from the dear ones at home. Depend upon it, Helen Crayston is right ; she always is, you know. You stay here, and just soar on over the heads of everybody. That's her vocation ; isn't it, Helen ? ”

Bertie looked up at the bright little creature who was waving her two out-spread arms gently up and down.

“ You make me laugh,” she said, “ when I ought to be serious.”

“ Why, that is the only good thing there is in me. Nobody can do anything whilst they are in the dumps. I am always so sorry for that poor man in the old ballad, who was in doleful dumps ; the end of it was that he had to fight upon his stumps.”

“ But they had shot his feet away : ” said Bertie ; “ that put him into doleful dumps. What could he do ? ”

“ Depend on it, it was the fault of the doleful dumps ! ”

“ Very well,” said Bertie, rising, “ I'll have nothing more to do with them.”

“ That's a darling ! Just you go on your own way, Bertie. Take no notice of anybody or

anything. If there is a little fighting to be done leave it to me ; I rather think I can get through it gracefully. Just now I must go home to my two boys, the old, you know, and the young, so good-bye !”

A moment later Mrs. Brownlow returned.

“Bertie, dear, they haven’t shot your feet away, have they ?”

“Not at all :” replied Bertie, bright and eager. “Even if they had I could fight on my stumps as well as another.”

“Helen, you resident darling, come and help me find that pony. I can’t see it anywhere.”

Miss Crayston left the room, smiling as she always did when Mrs. Brownlow in her pretty imperious way called her by her Christian name.

“My dear Helen, what does it all mean ?”

“I cannot tell. I must hear more before I can venture to form an opinion.”

“Is there any foundations for the statement about Bertie’s people ?”

“That is exactly what I want to find out. Not that it makes any difference to Bertie. I am sure we shall all advise her to remain and work on, whether the thing asserted is altogether false or only a distorted fact.”

“My cousin, Mary Nicholl, has told me about

Mr. Ravenshaw, and I don't believe he was ever the man to eat sour grapes. But in any case I think we may frustrate the attempt of these ladies, who have undertaken the pious office of setting his children's teeth on edge."

Mrs. Brownlow found Mr. and Mrs. Nicholl and Mr. Walmsley in the little study with her husband, when she returned.

"My dear:" said Mr. Brownlow, "we laughed at you for some time, but for the last two hours we have been growing anxious. What is the matter, child? you look quite pale."

"Oh, Jack, I'm not a woman, I'm an angel. If I'd been only a woman I should have committed murder before ever I returned to the bosom of my family."

"We'll say nothing at present of this novel distinction between women and angels, but we should really like to know what is wrong."

Whereupon Mrs. Brownlow told them.

"This is insufferable!" exclaimed Mr. Nicholl.

"The most iniquitous thing I ever heard of:" said Mr. Walmsley.

"Mary, give me the whole history of the Ravenshaw family on the spot."

"It is very short, Bell; I think I know all that there is of it. Mr. Ravenshaw saw his wife for

the first time at a dance in his own servants' hall ; fell in love with her, and on account of urgent opposition in his family and I believe in hers also, he induced her to join him in Paris, and they were married at the Embassy.

"Rather an imprudent step, wasn't it?" asked Mr. Brownlow.

"It does sound awkward," said Mr. Nicholl, "but it is so very difficult to discover or appreciate all the reasons that urge a person towards a particular line of action."

"In this case," said Mrs. Nicholl, "Mr. Ravenshaw's sister counts for a good deal. She was a most unprincipled, spiteful woman. She had no influence whatever over her brother, but it was in consequence of her persistent misrepresentations of his character and intentions that old Mr. Harmer, Mrs. Ravenshaw's father, forbid him to enter the house, and said he would rather follow his daughter to the grave than see her married to such a man."

"Go on, Mary ; I was sure you'd tell us all about it, but how did she get to Paris, and was she a cook?"

"She wasn't a cook, and she had no business to be in the servants' hall. It was a foolish freak which has cost her dear. She went, I believe,

with some friend whose relation was an upper servant. Still she was not Mr. Ravenshaw's equal in birth. Her father, who is now dead, was a retired tradesman; his children have all risen in the world, and Dr. Harmer of Exeter, Bertie's uncle, is a man of considerable reputation as a consulting physician."

"Come, that's a point in our favour!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, clapping her hands.

"The Paris journey was a grave mistake. I wonder Ravenshaw did not see that:" said Mr. Walmsley.

"Oh! but she didn't go with him. He was there for a month and then she joined him, travelling with an old housekeeper of his, a Mrs. Duckworth, and with her brother. But Miss Ravenshaw always asserted that the marriage at the Embassy was invalid, and some years afterwards she offered to leave the whole of her fortune, a very large one, to her brother, on condition that the marriage ceremony was performed again in England."

"Did he consent?"

"No; he begged her to do what she liked with her money; and told her she knew as well as he did that the marriage was legal."

"But why did she contest this?"

She seemed to take a fiendish delight in calling her brother's children illegitimate; and if she could by any possibility have got hold of them when they were of an age to understand, she would have told them so."

"Mary, I think you are going a little too far."

"Not at all. Her bosom friend was an evil-disposed old Miss Kimberley, my mother's second cousin, through whom I know this story, of which I have never spoken to any one. Miss Kimberley always hoped Miss Ravenshaw wouldn't die until she had fulfilled what she called her 'righteous mission.'"

"And did she fulfil it?"

"I am happy to say she did not. She died, and left her money to the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts."

"A brilliant idea strikes me, Mary. Our correspondent, Miss Kimberley Finch, must be a branch from the Kimberley stock."

"Well, dear, she doesn't belong to the same family."

"Then an admiring parent or godmother gave her that name, and she must have acquired a few of the peculiarities of her namesake. Depend on it natural selection has had something to do with it. But, Johnnie, it's an awful thing

that an old Kimberley ghost should be clawing at our Bertie. It makes me think of the harpies coming down to pollute the beautiful feast."

"Yes, my dear, but don't cry about it. I think we can make it all right:" said the professor, fidgeting about his wife, and surreptitiously kissing a handkerchief that was round her neck.

"But you have not seen Bertie:" said Mrs. Brownlow, with streaming eyes.

"Indeed we have," exclaimed Mr. Walmsley. "We have seen her moving about for the last three days like an angel of spotless purity who looks for the first time into a guilty world."

"I like that:" said Mrs. Brownlow, rubbing her hands slowly; "it's poetical, isn't it, Jack?"

Mr. Walmsley was recalled to prose by the laughter of his friends.

"I tell you what," he resumed, "we'd better go to the Principal and talk the matter over. Sir Bartle has put all arrangements connected with the scholarship in his hands, and when I saw him this afternoon he proposed, at Lady Mary's suggestion, to make over his powers to the Ladies' Committee, which will never do."

"But why does he propose such a thing?"

"As a concession. You see we are kicking against the pricks."

"Well, then, kick hard:" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow,

"My dear, the harder we kick the worse we are hurt; and I am afraid there is no recorded instance of such a course being successful."

"I don't know what you mean by pricks."

"Why, a few ladies have got all the money as well as the premises we occupy, that is, more power than they can exercise judiciously."

"Johnny, you are degraded by contact with an inferior wife. Don't you see, my dear, that the mistake has been that you have put the new wine into old leathern bottles."

"They are old:" conceded Mr. Brownlow.

"Well, they'll burst, and then we shall be all right."

"How so?" inquired Mr. Walmsley.

"Why, we shall be guided by experience, and put the new wine into new bottles."

"I think there is a great deal in what my wife says. These ladies only partly realise the new conditions in which they find themselves. They are unable to meet us frankly and respond to our efforts on behalf of female education. Instead of moving forward with us towards a common

object, they are incessantly drawn aside by petty personal aims. They want to secure their own power, or rather their own supremacy, and they think such a paltry thing as money is to purchase it. Left to themselves their minds narrow down to a pin's point, and it will take them a month to decide on which door-mat a young woman of twenty shall wipe her shoes ; whether she shall bow once to a member of the committee or every time she meets her, and what shall be the penalty for non-compliance with these paltry regulations."

"I must interrupt you a moment:" said Mrs. Nicholl. "Many of us were determined not to sanction any regulations whatever on these points, and it was that which prolonged our last discussion ; in fact, converted it into a struggle."

"A struggle in which you were defeated:" said Mr. Brownlow.

"Johnny:" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, "I never think so highly of your intellect as when you understand my dark sayings and make them luminous ; nothing that you ever do, seems to me such a forcible illustration of the superiority of the married state ; but, my love, don't allow yourself to be beguiled into a taunt. You have told me frequently that temporary success

is allied quite as closely to the long purse as to the big battalions, but that neither of them have a chance in the long run against right and truth and justice."

"I did not intend to taunt you, little woman. I wished to call attention to the fact that probably we are altogether on the wrong tack; and that these ladies, by the very force of the evil that they have done and suggested, are being dragged to lower and lower depths."

"Mary, do you accept this explanation as an apology?"

"I think, Bell," replied Mrs. Nicholl, laughing, "that no apology was needed. We were defeated at the committee."

"Yes, dear, but he said it in a very unpleasant way. However, John, the chair rules that you are no longer out of order, and you may proceed."

"We will, my love; we will walk up to the Abbey, and have a chat with the Principal."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CHECKMATE.

"WE pay you a very early call:" said Miss le Mesurier to Principal Ellis, in a manner which she tried to make ingratiating; "the fact is, that after Lady Mary's communication yesterday, we thought it desirable to lose no time."

"Of course Lady Mary told us that her announcement was informal:" added Miss Green, with a precipitancy which brought a frown to the brow of her friends.

"When a wife speaks for her husband she speaks with authority:" interposed Mrs. Armstrong, by way of reproof to Miss Ellen.

"Ah!" said the Principal, looking up at the last speaker, for he was very small and she was a large woman. "Ah!" and then he paused.

"We have relieved Miss Flint from all duties for three days," continued Mrs. Armstrong, "so that she may sit at the examination table. We

can rely upon her for keeping a strict watch on every movement. In fact nothing ever escapes her."

"And then," pursued Miss Ellen Green, "we shall be present ourselves ; but whether we shall occupy the corners of the room or place ourselves at the back of the students, or in front of each desk, is a point which requires further consideration."

"Ah!" ejaculated the Principal a second time, and then he paused.

"We have decided to isolate certain students ; which is a matter that of course rests with us:" said Miss le Mesurier, harshly, for she thought of Bertie who was still in Minster.

So did the Principal ; who had turned from one speaker to the other. He now looked up at Miss le Mesurier.

"Will you come into the study?" he said, "and I will tell you what I propose to do."

"It is really a pity to take up your time:" said Mrs. Armstrong in a compassionate tone. She always felt for the Principal. He looked so frail and nervous, she said, and as if he couldn't master his emotion. He had a habit too of standing before one, and looking up in one's face in an eager, tremulous way ; and it was difficult to

know what he meant by it. Once a tall, gaunt woman to whom he was talking, had stopped suddenly, laid her hands on his shoulders, kissed him and shed tears. No one knew why she did it, but Mrs. Armstrong had often said she didn't wonder, and that she couldn't help feeling for him herself. However, he led the way to the study, and when the ladies were seated, he stood before them on the hearthrug, looking straight into their eyes.

"I have decided," he said in a tremulous voice, but with an earnest steady gaze, "I have decided to conduct the examinations precisely as I should do if they were held for University students."

"That is exactly what we desire:" exclaimed Miss Ellen Green. "My dear friend, Miss Kimberley Finch, assures me that if this is fairly done all dispute as to the relative capacity of the sexes will be set at rest."

"The two examiners," continued the Principal, not noticing the interruption, "will sit up exactly as they do at other times, having sole charge and control of all arrangements."

"We can't possibly allow such a thing:" said Miss le Mesurier fiercely. "It is not to be thought of."

"Hush, Barbara!" exclaimed her friends.

“These two gentlemen will arrive from Oxford to-morrow, and details will be left to them:” resumed the Principal, whose voice soared up as he spoke, and was still somewhat unsteady. “I am sorry that my wife mentioned to you our first idea with regard to the examinations, for it is now definitely abandoned.”

“St. Mary’s is under the control of the Ladies’ Committee, and we have been appointed a sub-committee for the special purpose of the examinations:” said Miss le Mesurier in her harshest tones. “We shall not concede one tittle of our rights to regulate all the arrangements in the Ladies’ College.”

“I have consulted Sir Bartle; he warmly approves of my scheme, therefore I have resolved to hold the examinations in my own college, and in St. Andrew’s Hall:” continued the Principal.

“Where!” ejaculated the ladies, aghast.

“What, amongst the male students!” cried Mrs. Armstrong. “Parents will never tolerate such a scandalous arrangement; young men are not to be trusted.”

“My dear Principal, you cannot possibly be in earnest:” said Miss Ellen Green, clasping her hands, and with tears streaming from her eyes. “You do not know what precautions are necessary.

For the sake of our dear girls I implore you to pause and reflect."

"I am sorry to find you think so badly of the students:" replied the Principal, smiling benignly.

"I am rather proud of them, and so is my wife. We see a good deal, and hear more, and I think it is you who do not know them. The Minster students as a rule are gentlemen, and with the instincts of gentlemen. You must remember that a young fellow would fail in the self-respect of a man if he could offer insult to a lady. I believe we have none such in the University."

The Principal's voice had risen almost to a sob, as it did when he spoke earnestly, and the ladies were abashed.

"But, my dear Principal:" said Miss Ellen Green, rising to lay her hand upon his arm; "of course you intend to have ladies in the room."

"We intend to have the candidates, all of whom are ladies, and the examiners."

"And not the committee?" she urged, with clasped hands.

"And not the committee:" replied the Principal. His tones were tremulous, but there was something both in voice and manner which made the statement final. The ladies were silent, and after a few moments he continued:

"I have discussed the matter fully with my wife, and she quite approves of the proposed arrangements."

"Can we see Lady Mary?" asked Miss Ellen Green, and the ladies rose from their chairs.

"I am sorry to say she is not well enough to leave her room to-day."

"May I ask what precautions you intend to take?" asked Mrs. Armstrong.

"Not any:" replied the Principal.

"The candidates will have to cross the quadrangle in order to reach the Hall," urged Miss le Mesurier; "and pray do you suppose there will be no young men about?"

"I really cannot say. I think it highly probable that there will."

"Come away, Ellen:" said Miss Barbara. "We are only taking up the Principal's time and wasting our own:" and she marched out of the room.

"Who is at the bottom of this, do you suppose?" she exclaimed, turning fiercely upon her companions, when the Abbey-gates closed upon them. "Who but the Lady Resident and that girl."

"I will walk up to St. Mary's and find out:" replied Miss Ellen Green.

On her way she pondered : " I will put the question to her in a direct manner," she thought ; " of course she won't answer, but I shall see at once if she knows anything."

" Well, Miss Crayston, what do you think of the new arrangements for the examinations ?" asked Miss Ellen, as she walked up to the Lady Resident's table.

" I like them very much : " replied that lady.

Miss Ellen Green stared at her :

" And pray who told you of them ? "

The Lady Resident opened her eyes, and did not reply immediately.

" Principal Ellice has written to me : " she said, after a moment's pause.

" Well, he showed more consideration to you than to the committee : " was the angry rejoinder.

" He knew that the candidates would come to me for information this morning, and that I should have to write a paper for the notice board."

" By whose authority do you put up that notice ? "

" I put it up at the request of the chairman of the council," replied the Lady Resident, looking up at Miss Ellen.

That lady was speechless with indignation,

and left the room. An hour later she returned somewhat mollified.

"Miss Ravenshaw was absent from her class:" she said. "She has gone home, poor girl, I suppose."

"Oh no, she is reading hard for the examination, and is excused from attendance at the classes for the next three days."

"I had hoped she would have enough right feeling not to force herself upon us. We have good reason for attributing the falling off in numbers at the boarding-house to her influence."

"How so?" asked Miss Crayston.

"I should really like to talk the matter over with you:" continued Miss Ellen Green. "I am sure you will agree with me; people belonging to good families cannot differ in their views on such subjects; and you must see, as I do, that a flaw, a stain in a good family is, and ought to be, a fatal objection."

"I don't quite understand you," replied Miss Crayston, "so I cannot say that I agree. To what ought it to be an objection?"

"There is no doubt," said Miss Green, "that Mr. Ravenshaw married beneath his own rank; and you must acknowledge that there are social disadvantages connected with such a step."

“Yes:” replied Miss Crayston, “at the same time I must say that the children of such marriages are often exceptionally fine and noble, and I do not wonder at it. When a really honourable man like Mr. Ravenshaw loves a woman for her beauty, her intelligence, and her kindly nature, and resolves to make her his wife, there is that in the parents which ensures a happy future for them and their children. The Ravenshaws are the most beautiful young people I have ever seen, and, taken as a whole, of quite exceptional ability and moral excellence. I know the house at Rugby where the two elder boys now are, and I hear the highest praise of them. We have all seen what Miss Ravenshaw is; and there are younger sisters who will, I believe, prove in every respect her worthy successors.”

Miss Ellen Green, who was, superficially, very easily influenced, listened to the Lady Resident with apparent interest. But she shook her head sadly:

“Ah!” she replied, “but there are worse things than unequal marriages, and suppose this should prove to be one!”

“Have you good grounds for such an assertion!”

“I have the best reason for believing that

there was nothing but a fictitious foreign arrangement between Mr. Ravenshaw and the so-called Mrs. Ravenshaw."

"I am quite certain that you have been misinformed. I visited the Ravenshaws in the summer. I find that some of my friends know them well; and I have been assured within the last few days that there is not the slightest foundation for such a malignant statement."

Miss Ellen Green closed her lips tightly as if to say that she would not be forced into betraying the sources of her information.

"You are young and inexperienced:" she continued, after a pause: "You do not know how these things are looked upon. Take the Verdon Browns now, for instance; John Verdon Brown, led away by folly inaugurated by Shelley, thought it religious and honourable to omit the marriage ceremony; though his friends persuaded him to make it all right after a time. Well, his third daughter, Madeleine Verdon Brown, is my dearest friend; a more beautiful, noble, accomplished woman never lived. She really is *perfect*, and yet although I have known her for thirty years, and hold her in the highest honour and esteem, I have never once allowed her to be present when I expect my brother, Colonel Gerard Green, to visit me."

Miss Crayston said coldly :

“ Why not ? ”

“ How can you ask me ! When they were young there would have been a great risk for Colonel Green on account of Madeleine’s remarkable beauty. I love her dearly as a friend, but I could not have survived the disgrace of having her introduced into our family ; ” and Miss Ellen Green shuddered. “ You can help us in this matter,” she continued, “ and try to make Miss Ravenshaw listen to reason. It will be really better for her to withdraw ; if she does not, we are determined to bring the matter before the council, and she will be expelled.”

Upon this the Lady Resident stood up and spoke her mind. The result was that Miss Ellen Green left the room, and, meeting Mrs. Armstrong, she said :

“ I thought it really worth while to make a final appeal, but she has attacked me with such fury that I feel quite ill.”

“ It was a mistake to say anything : ” replied Mrs. Armstrong. “ She has out-manceuvred us ; but the game is not at an end.”

For the next three days a fierce battle raged around the unconscious Bertie. The decision of the Principal to admit girls within the sacred

precincts of the University Hall was assailed by friends and foes. It conceded too little, said friends ; and too much, said foes. Why should he refuse to admit ladies to the ordinary classes and allow them to attend examinations, said some ? How could he preserve the college for male students, protested others, if he once allowed men and women to work together under the same roof ?

“I hate the small end of the wedge !” exclaimed Goldworthy Fynes bitterly. He was at an evening party, where the question of the admission was being discussed.

“Don’t do that !” said Mrs. Brownlow ; “it’s not Christian. Oh, I beg your pardon ; I didn’t mean it. You see I have been brought up on the old system ; and I’m such a poor creature, that I am thankful for any crumbs of religion or morality that the reforming dogs leave me.”

“You need not apologise for speaking of Christianity :” replied Professor Fynes, coldly. “I am told that one or two of the leading Neo-Christian clergymen in this place have been studying Comte, and that they preach positivist morality every Sunday.”

“I hope it is really a good sort of morality,” said Mrs. Brownlow, “or whatever will become

of us ! It will never do to lose Christian morality and get nothing in its place."

"You need have no fear. Positivism adopts everything worth preserving in Christianity, and undoubtedly Christianity may be patched up with Positivism to look almost as good as new in some people's eyes, and to be indeed a useful article for some years longer."

"Thank you so much : " replied Mrs. Brownlow ; " whenever I can leave the boy I go to hear the Principal preach. I want to scrape together one or two safe dogmas for the child's sake. You know you told me the other day that religion without a dogma is worthless and impotent for social purposes, and I must try and give the poor little man a peg for his positivist morality."

Goldworthy Fynes had an uncomfortable feeling with regard to the artless wife of his colleague. She looked at him with her large eyes and baby mouth, and gave him the most cruel stabs.

"Is Miss Crayston here to-night ?" he asked.

"No ; she told me she should walk with Miss Ravenshaw this afternoon, or keep her at home this evening."

"Ah—h—h !" exclaimed Sir Bartle Fossey, who approached with Lady Fossey on his arm. "Miss Ravenshaw ! I say, Fynes, she won't be

far back in the race if she's as good as she looks."

"My dear," interposed Lady Fossey, "how often I tell you that a deep well is very often an empty one."

"You do:" replied Sir Bartle laughing. He was in high good humour, and very much amused at the excitement created by the examination: "You do, certainly; but I must say I find that the deep well is quite as often full as empty. Hey, Fynes! What do you say?"

Sir Bartle and Lady Fossey passed on, leaving the professor disappointed and somewhat angry. He wished the Lady Resident to study Positivism. He had no doubt what the result would be on one of her power and cultivation. He had a book in his pocket with a certain page turned down, and she had chosen to stay away and spend the evening with Miss Ravenshaw. Being annoyed at the Lady Resident's absence, and at the arrangements for holding examinations for women in St. Andrew's Hall, he was half inclined to think hardly of Bertie.

In the minds of the majority of the professors, however, and of a large number of students, rumours of persecution and injustice had not only roused a strong feeling in favour of that young

lady, but also in favour of such arrangements as were necessary to secure fair play for her.

“They will all have fair play:” was the sentence that recurred most frequently on this evening; although little groups of men and women discussed the question on its merits, eagerly if not angrily.

Lord Ronald and his friends searched throughout the rooms for Bertie and the Lady Resident. But Miss Crayston and Mrs. Brownlow had decided that Bertie should be kept from everything that could recall her interview with the trustees, and should have nothing to disturb the work in which she was happily engrossed.

“What are you thinking about, my dear?” asked Professor Brownlow of his wife. She was standing with folded hands, and a smile in her eyes, as she looked towards a distant part of the room where Professor Fynes, tossing the dark hair out of his eyes, was speaking authoritatively to a small group of women.

She looked up at her husband and replied:

“The new beatitude, John. Blessed are the cocksure.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SWEET GIRL GRADUATES.

WHEN the eventful day arrived, Bertie, quite unconscious of the speculation concerning her which stirred all Minster, walked alone to the old city, entered the college gates, and crossed the quadrangle; ten or a dozen young men stood near the door of entrance, and raised their hats as she passed. A janitor conducted her to a spacious hall where she was received by the two Oxford examiners. There were eleven candidates for the Fossey Exhibition, all well known to each other. Bertie was a universal favourite, and every girl present wished that if she did not gain the Exhibition herself it might fall to Bertie Ravenshaw. Lily Carter had been sent up by her parents, and there were two girls from the boarding-house who looked sad but resolute. Lily caught Bertie's hand as she passed on her way to the seat appointed for her:

“Such a dunce as I am for an examination!” she exclaimed, laughing, “and my poor head all of a muddle.”

The day passed without incident. Bertie was happy, she liked work; she enjoyed sitting in the grand old college hall with her paper of puzzling questions, and working the answers out into order and precision. There was nothing she could not do, or rather, she corrected herself and added, there was nothing she could not try to do. When she raised her eyes from the paper they fell upon the bent heads of her companions, or the grave faces of the two examiners, seated in leather chairs near the fire-place. Like a dream it seemed to her that she, a girl, should be sitting where so many young men who had afterwards become great and famous, had sat in their day and worked as she was working: “I must do my very best,” she thought, and she did it.

As she was leaving the hall on the first day Lily Carter ran after her.

“Bertie, Bertie!” she called. “How many p’s are there in hypocrisy?”

“Is it a conundrum?” asks Bertie.

“No, no; do tell me.”

“One,” was the reply.

“Then I may as well give up,” exclaims Lily,

in a voice of despair, "for I have written it with two."

"Never mind:" says Bertie, in a soothing tone, taking her friend by the arm. "You need not put yourself out about that, for it won't be of the slightest consequence. My brother George always spells across with two c's and ever so many things like that, and he gets through all right. They say the examiners are getting used to bad spelling."

"What a comfort!" sighed Lily.

Several of Lily's companions discovered that they also had cause for anxiety on the score of spelling, and the girl who had put four p's and two t's in hippopotamus received much commiseration from her friends.

At length the work was over, and in a few days the award of the examiners was to be made known. Sir Bartle Fossey wished the announcement to be made with some publicity: "None of your hole and corner work:" he said. "Let us have drums and trumpets, and show we are not ashamed of our young ladies."

Principal Ellice therefore arranged to receive the candidates and their friends in the University Hall, and the students resolved to give them a welcome.

Bertie was to accompany Miss Crayston ; but that lady was detained by Miss Flint, who had been requested by Mrs. Armstrong to investigate some error in a bill, of which the Lady Resident knew nothing.

“ I suppose I am keeping you from this public entertainment : ” said Miss Flint.

“ It doesn’t matter. I told Miss Ravenshaw not to wait for me.”

“ Has she actually gone alone ? ” asked Miss Flint.

“ Half-an-hour ago : ” replied the Lady Resident with a smile ; whereupon Miss Flint, defeated in her object, collected her bills ; but she could not quite control her temper, or repress an angry ejaculation.

Almost the last to enter the college gates was Bertie Ravenshaw. Sir Bartle, the professors, parents, and pupils had all received boisterous applause, and when Bertie arrived it was no longer ten or a dozen students who awaited her, but a dense throng, standing silent on each side of a narrow path. At the college gate was Lord Ronald in his cap and gown, with light hair fluttering in the wind. He gave the signal which others obeyed. But when Bertie advanced, he felt there would be something brutal in shouting

a welcome in the face of the bright sweet maiden in whose eyes, as she advanced, he discerned a startled look, not of fear, but certainly of gracious shyness. So he raised his cap and held it high above his head as Bertie passed, and taking a dainty bunch of flowers from his button-hole threw them at her feet. His example guided all those present; and Bertie, blushing, walked forward through a silent throng, with flowers falling around her. They watched her keenly, these youths who had met to do honour to the ladies, admitted to their hall; noticed how her colour came and went, how the eyes shone beneath their downcast lids, and what a tremulous light seemed to flutter about the face, as if smiles or tears might break forth at any moment. A long flight of steps led to the entrance of the great hall, and the students stood still, silent and bareheaded, as Bertie ascended. When she raised her eyes she saw the Principal and Lady Mary Ellice, smiling upon her from the topmost step. The Principal came forward, and took both her hands in his; Lady Mary threw her arms round the young girl's neck and kissed her, and then the ringing cheers broke forth.

“You must bow to them, my love:” said Lady Mary.

“Come with me, please :” said Bertie, taking Lady Mary’s hand, and the two ladies turned and stood for a moment on the topmost step. Lady Mary smiled, Bertie bowed, and the students crowded forward with shouts and cheers.

“It is very beautiful of them to welcome the girls to their college, and I do love them for it :” said Bertie, turning her beaming face to the Principal. “It is just the kind of thing my father would have done when he was young.”

The Principal looked at her, and his lips trembled, but he did not reply.

“We are rather late, I fear :” said Lady Mary. “You have to go along that passage, Bertie, and enter by a small door which you will see at the far end. We go to the daïs, and shall be in before you.”

The hall was nearly full when Bertie entered, and she took her seat by the side of Lily Carter. The Principal and the professors in their black gowns occupied the daïs ; the Oxford examiners, Sir Bartle Fossey and a few local magnates, were also there. A moment later and there was a rush and a hubbub of voices as the under-graduates took possession of their gallery.

“Just like a set of unmannerly school-boys :”

exclaimed Mrs. Armstrong; "and what a noise they were making outside!"

"It is a great pity the college girls were not placed together, instead of being scattered all over the hall:" said Miss Ellen Green.

"Their behaviour would certainly have contrasted most favourably with that of the males:" added Miss le Mesurier.

"The candidates *are* together, near the side of the daïs," she continued, "and of course Miss Ravenshaw has contrived to come last and get into a position where every one can see her. How parents can allow a mere girl to wear such expensive clothes I can't imagine; but I suppose one ought not to be surprised at anything Miss Ravenshaw's mother may do."

"Hush! There's somebody speaking. Oh, it's Hopkins!"

A stout florid man with dark curly hair addressed the meeting. He explained at great length to the Principal, the professors, the students and their assembled friends, the facts connected with Sir Bartle Fossey's gift, which everybody knew. He was not quite safe in the matter of names, dates, and numbers; and as he had recently been interviewed by Miss Ellen Green, and had received a letter from Miss

Kimberley Finch, he announced that St. Mary's college for women had been founded, endowed and was entirely supported and governed by ladies.

"No, no:" cried the professors; and the Oxford examiner turned to the Principal, who shook his head. Whereupon the examiner stated that he would not occupy himself with details, and sat down.

The Principal said a few gracious words of welcome to the students from St. Mary's; one or two of the professors did the same, and one and all eulogised Sir Bartle Fossey.

These preliminaries being ended, the awards of the examiners were read aloud.

Bertie Ravenshaw was the first name on the first list, and it was greeted with a shout.

"Facile princeps:" said the examiner, with a bland smile, turning to his colleague, who also smiled.

Bertie Ravenshaw recurred again and again, and always first on the list. The excitement of the students increased at each repetition of the name, and there were shouts of applause from all parts of the hall. Lily Carter stood up and uttered wild cries as she waved a handkerchief over her head, then sat down and wiped her face

with it ; finally she made it into a tight ball, and clasped it between her hands. There was a great flutter of handkerchiefs, for all Bertie's college companions greeted her in this manner, all except one, a little dark creature with close-cropped hair, who went about with a huge alpaca umbrella. She had the umbrella between her knees, and pounded away steadily upon the floor. If there was a momentary intermission in the cheering this was as a signal to arms, and caused it to be renewed.

The shouts, the cries of *Bertie, Bertie Ravenshaw*, the waving of caps and handkerchiefs, and the hands and arms outstretched in a wild effort to grasp hers, drew Bertie to her feet. She stood blushing, smiling, radiant with happiness.

"Oh, Mary !" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow to her cousin. "This is really going a little too far ; I like good looks ; but that girl's too beautiful for anything. She's perfectly dazzling. Something will have to come down with wings and take her away, for we shall never get her home in the ordinary manner."

"God bless my soul !" ejaculated Sir Bartle, who had come forward and stood gazing at Bertie : "I say, Ellice, if this is the kind of woman

that is going in for higher education we shall have to look out."

He turned to the students, with whom he was very popular, and began his speech by saying :

"I tell you what, boys, it is the topmost branches that bear the finest fruit, and they that hope to gather it must climb high. Mind you ; I find no fault : " he added, in reply to the laughter and cheers with which he was greeted.

He stumbled through a short address which was vociferously applauded, and turned to the Principal when it was ended, wiping his brow with a handkerchief.

"Only a paltry hundred a year!" he said. "Why didn't you give me a hint, man? I'd have made it two or three with pleasure! Just see how well that girl is groomed! I wouldn't have her fall off in condition on any account. Don't let a little money stand in the way, there's a good fellow. Just put the thing into Lady Mary's hands, for you clever ones know nothing about it."

"I assure you, Sir Bartle," replied the Principal, "that Miss Ravenshaw values the honour and not the money. Her father is a wealthy man. But I must say a few words. I will tell you more afterwards."

The Principal advanced, and began to address

the audience. Bertie, with throbbing pulses and a beating heart, could not at first distinguish his words; but what was this he was saying! Lady Mary had hoped that Mr. and Mrs. Ravenshaw would have been her guests, and would have been spectators of a scene that must so deeply gratify a parent's heart. Why did Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Nicholl cheer so vociferously at the mention of her father's name, and set off the whole room again! And when there was silence the Principal continued that he had written to his esteemed friend, Dr. Harmer of Exeter, Mrs. Ravenshaw's brother, with whose name they must all be familiar, but, unfortunately, professional engagements had prevented him from joining them, and he could only telegraph congratulations to his niece.

Why did Professor Walmsley applaud the mention of her uncle's name, and why did all those near him do the same! Philip le Mesurier was present, and his loud "Hear, hear!" had called her attention for the first time to his massive figure. Mr. Tredwen was there also. What did it all mean! Was there something more than she knew! And then in a moment it became clear, and Bertie bowed her face upon her hands. People had heard the things that

had been said, they loved her and wished to comfort her, and to show her that these things were false.

"Bertie, my love:" said the Lady Resident, who hurried to her side as soon as the Principal had finished speaking, "What is it!"

"God is very good to me:" said Bertie, looking up with a sweet, pale face. She rose and they left the hall.

"I must say that I do like to hear the Principal speak about this new college:" said a lady to a friend near her. "I always learn something from him."

"So do I!" was the reply.

"You see," said the first speaker, "my husband intended to write to Price Reece of Bristol, and ask him to meet Dr. Smart in consultation about our poor Arthur; but as soon as I get home I will make him telegraph for this Dr. Harmer. He must be a very eminent man, by the way the Principal speaks of him."

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